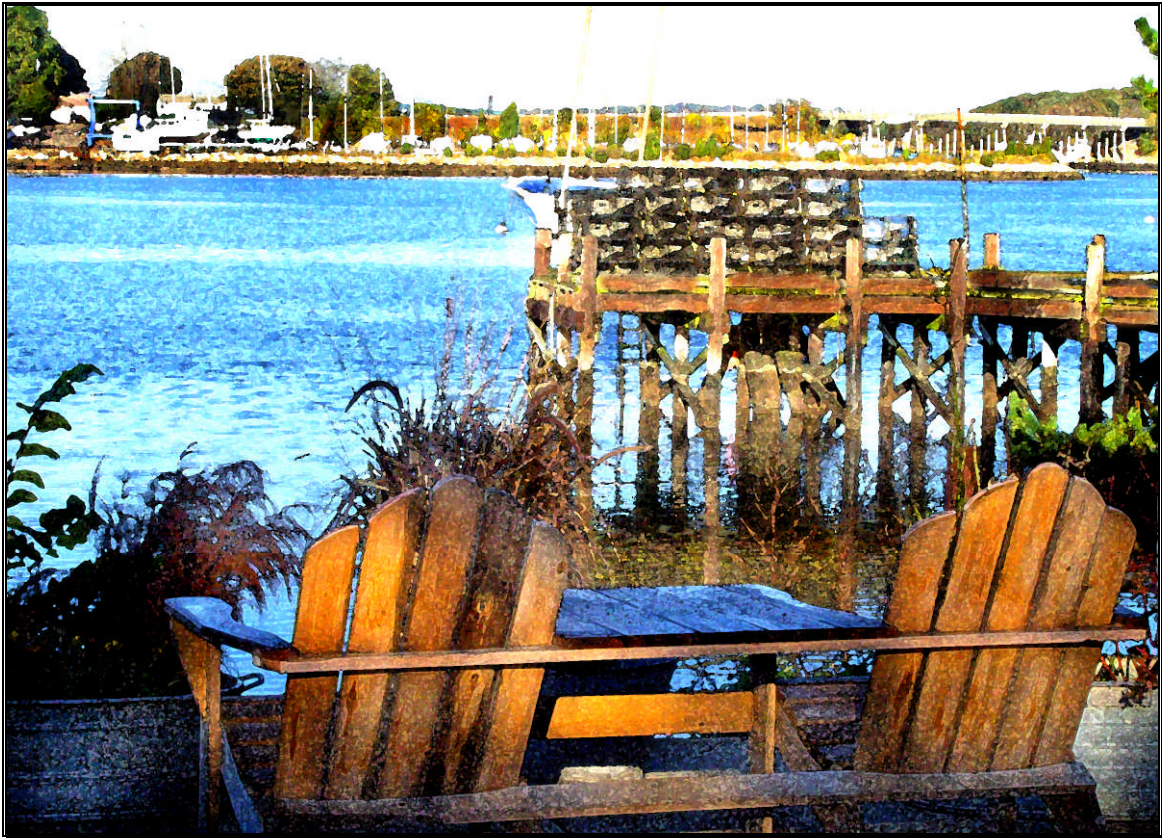


# **Tiverton, Rhode Island**

“Looking Ahead and Planning Together”



**The Comprehensive Community Plan**  
*2006 Update*

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## **The Comprehensive Community Plan** *2006 Update*

Adopted by the Tiverton Planning Board and Tiverton Town Council; *Month, Day, 2006*  
Certified by the Department of Administration; *Month, Day, 2006*  
All previous revisions superceded

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **PREFACE**

*In 1989 Tivertonians recognized the need for a comprehensive plan that would protect the many unique natural features of their surroundings, while providing for and directing the form and location of future growth.*

*Town residents appreciate the rural and small town qualities that Tiverton possesses and want to ensure that the town's historical development as a series of picturesque hamlets dependent on farming and fishing remains evident into the future.*

*Throughout the planning process, public participation was encouraged. From this community involvement, a consensus plan gradually emerged that represents a wide variety of viewpoints and visions which will guide Tiverton into the future, and ensure that the town continues to look ahead and plan together.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION** *(italics represent changes to current plan)*

### **1.1 What is the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan?**

The Tiverton Comprehensive *Community Plan* is a long-range guide to the physical development and preservation of the Town of Tiverton, Rhode Island. It is intended as a framework for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions. It states goals and objectives and recommends courses of action in the areas of natural and cultural resources, land use, housing, services and facilities, open space and recreation, circulation and economic development. Taken in its entirety, the Comprehensive *Community Plan* presents a vision for the future of the town, an advisory policy guide, and an agenda for future actions by the town and its citizens. *When reviewing development proposals, considering amendments to the town's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, and making policy decisions that affect land use and development, town officials rely on the plan to guide their actions.*

Planning is not a new activity in Tiverton. In 1967, the State of Rhode Island completed a community plan inventory and analysis for the town. In 1985, the state again assisted the town by preparing the *Town of Tiverton, Rhode Island, Comprehensive Community Plan*. Numerous analyses and reports concerning many aspects of the community have been consulted in the preparation of this document.

*The current Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan was prepared in the 1990's and received approval from the Statewide Planning Program of the RI Department of Administration on July 14, 1997. State law governing comprehensive plans mandates that each community undergo a review and update of its plan every five years. This version of the plan represents the first such major update. Each chapter was examined in detail and updated according to new Census and other data. All objectives and policies were reviewed, and if necessary modified or removed to reflect changes in circumstances since the late 1990's. Many objectives and policies were added in response to new issues. It is the town's intent to have the plan be a flexible document which evolves over time, but remains as the policy document which expresses the town's most fundamental goal – to preserve Tiverton's rural character, scenic beauty and high quality of life.*

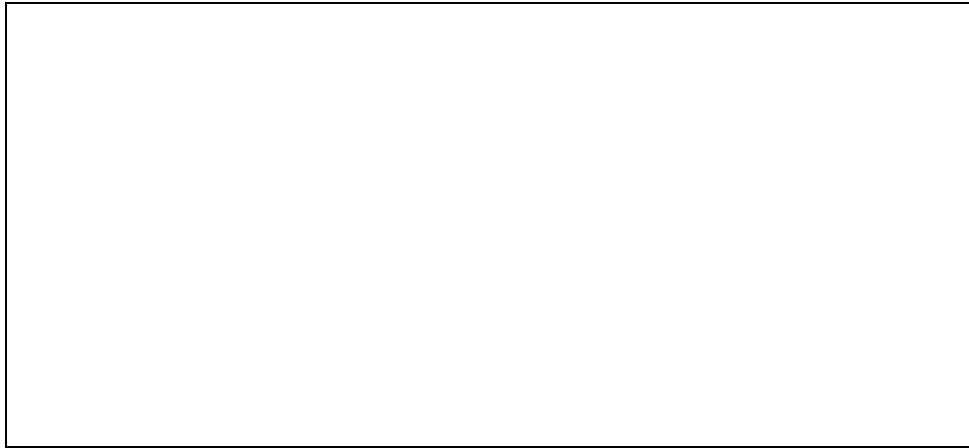


*Tiverton is defined by its rural and small town character.*

## 1.2 The Planning Process

This comprehensive plan was prepared under the 1988 state enabling statute related to land use planning (RIGL Title 45, Chapter 22). This law stipulates the plan's format and content, and requires community participation in the planning process.

The *planning process for the Comprehensive Community Plan* began in 1989 with a grant from the State of Rhode Island for funding to begin the plan. The town then selected the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. This committee, composed of over 70 residents as well as representatives of the town's boards and commissions, served to guide the preparation of the plan and coordinate public participation in the planning process.



*Citizens and volunteer board members work to plan Tiverton's future.*

A six-step planning process was used to prepare the plan. The first two steps included gaining an understanding of existing conditions and the major issues that confront the community. These steps involved interviews, field surveys and research into existing plans and documents. In addition, broader involvement was obtained through two public workshops and a survey questionnaire distributed throughout the town. The first workshop was an opportunity for citizens to raise concerns and articulate visions for the future of Tiverton. Eight public steering committee meetings and numerous smaller working sessions provided another forum for citizen input. The survey questionnaire, distributed throughout the community by the steering committee, enabled citizens to comment on the major issues confronting the community. Over 650 questionnaires were returned and tabulated.

Steps three and four of the planning process involved the elaboration of goals and objectives and the evaluation of *various* approaches to achieve them. The steering committee was organized into subcommittees to focus on each of the plan's seven functional elements and develop the plan's goals, objectives and policies.

Step five synthesized the initial steps into the draft comprehensive plan report. A second public workshop was held at this stage to evaluate mechanisms to implement the policies of the plan. The draft plan was circulated to adjoining municipalities in Rhode Island, and the City of Fall River and Town of Westport in Massachusetts. They were all asked to comment on specific aspects of the plan.

The final step in the plan's preparation involved the formal review and approval of the Comprehensive *Community Plan* by the Planning Board, Town Council and the State of Rhode Island. Following state approval, the Comprehensive *Community Plan* was implemented as a public policy document by the town.

*Because the Comprehensive Community Plan was developed through a community-wide participation process that sought to build consensus on how to address critical issues facing Tiverton in the future, its implementation should be reflected in the actions of the Town Council, Planning Board and other boards and commissions.*

*The 2005-2006 update was done by a subcommittee of the Planning Board that consisted principally of active citizens in town. The committee met over the duration of a year and a half to carefully review and update each chapter. All town committees and departments were contacted to ensure a broad-based and accurate update. The recommended amendments were forwarded to the Planning Board who then reviewed and either approved or modified each proposed amended element. The process of formal amendment of the Comprehensive Community Plan was done in the format of a public hearing on the part of both the Planning Board and the Town Council, as required by state law.*



*The Tiverton Planning Board*

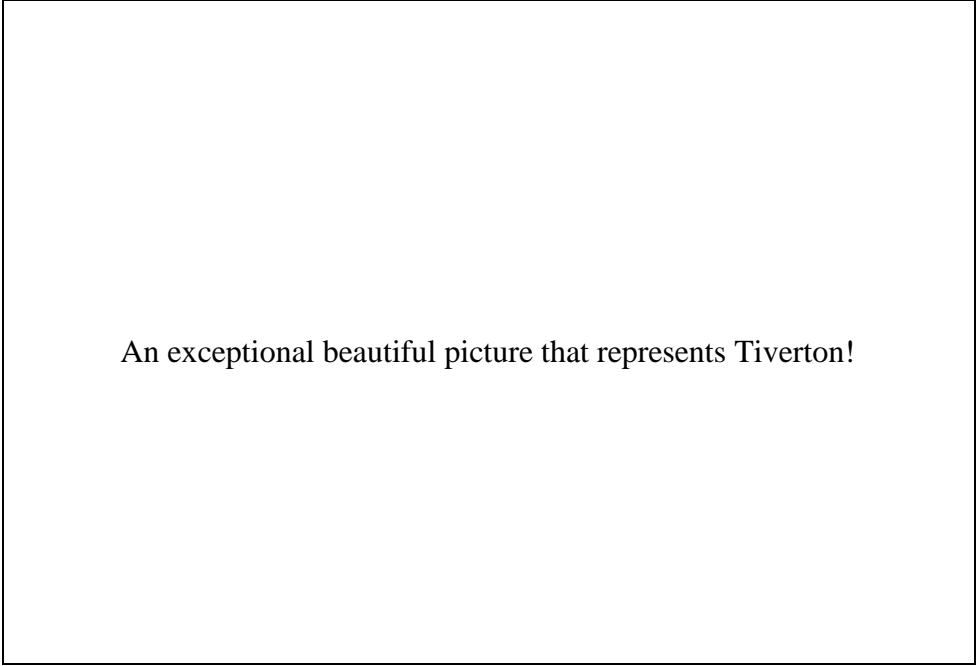
### **1.3 State Consistency**

Participation of the state Local Planning Assistance Office, a division of the Rhode Island Department of Administration, was encouraged throughout the planning process. Upon adoption by the Town Council, the plan was reviewed by the state to ensure compliance

with state goals, completion of required elements, and compliance with the rules and regulations of the state planning council. The plan has been adopted in accordance with RIGL Chapter 45, and submitted for review by the state in accordance with statutory requirements. Comments received from the state review of the plan have been addressed herein. *The 2005-06 update requires a similar process of review and approval by the appropriate state agencies.*

#### **1.4 Comprehensive Plan Maps**

The maps in this plan have been collected from a variety of sources; *all have been replaced and brought up to date as part of the 2005-06 update.* Some of the maps have been reproduced in larger versions, and a few have been printed in color. These may be viewed at the Town Hall.



An exceptional beautiful picture that represents Tiverton!

*The Comprehensive Community Plan aims to conserve natural features while accommodating future growth.*

## **2.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND** (*italics represent changes to current plan*)

### **2.1 Development History**

Tiverton's identity is derived from the interplay of its history, unique natural features and growth from a farming and waterfront community to a series of residential and commercial villages.

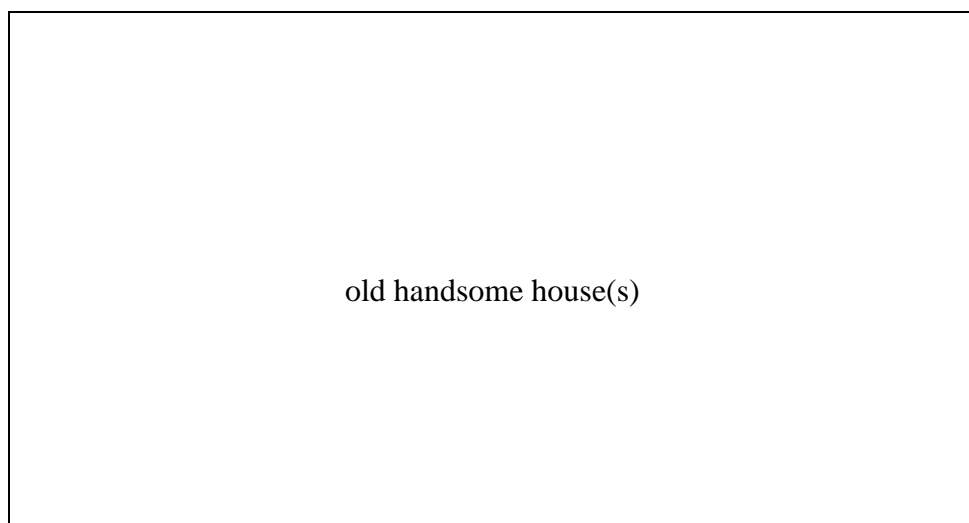
The Pocasset Indians settled the prime areas of Tiverton for farming and shellfishing along the Sakonnet River at Nanaquaket, Puncateest and Seapowet. Puncateest, Nanaquaket and Main Roads follow old Indian trails, and many later roads were named after farmsteads, natural features and commercial villages. A few roadways form *historic* crossroads such as *Bliss Four Corners* and Tiverton Four Corners, another small town quality that gives Tiverton an identity of its own. Along the shoreline, each inlet and peninsula has a place in history.

Stone Bridge derived its name from the old stone bridge that crossed the narrows, *the remains of which now form a breakwater that protects the Sakonnet River Basin*. Historic elements in this area are the Portsmouth commercial fishing docks which serve the local fleet of *shellfishermen* and commercial fisherman; marinas on Riverside Drive between the Sakonnet Bridge and Grinnell's Beach; and many historic homes. *The Stone Bridge Inn, located on Main Road across from the bridge, and once a hotel and theater, was demolished in 2000 and replaced with a small commercial plaza. The Newport and Old Colony Railroad Bridge, inoperative for many years, is to be dismantled as part of the Sakonnet River Bridge relocation project (see Circulation Chapter).*

Tiverton developed as a series of small hamlets along the waterfront and in inland areas based on farming and fishing. Many captain's houses from whaling days are found here and a great architectural legacy of colonial and federal era homes and estates are found along Puncateest, Nanaquaket, *Highland and Main Roads*. Many roadways in the southern portion of the town are lined by stone fences from historic farms. The hamlets centered around churches adjoined by cemeteries, schoolhouses and commercial establishments such as taverns, general stores and mills. These villages included a woolen factory and a store at Eagleville; a stone church on *Stone Church Road*; a general store at Bliss Four Corners; a windmill and tavern at Tiverton Four Corners later followed by a church, a store, blacksmith, post office and library; and a saw mill and grist mill at Nonquit Pond. Later development grew up around major thoroughfares and the crossroads areas began to lose their distinctive character.

The spine of Tiverton has always been Main Road, which runs along a natural ridgeline that follows the coast from Fall River to Little Compton. These two ends of Tiverton share some of the characteristics of the adjacent towns. To the north Tiverton is more urbanized, with a history associated with the Bourne and Eagleville Mills where housing was originally constructed for mill workers. Stafford Pond was part of a water system to power these and other mills in Fall River. Indeed, Fall River still retains water rights to

the pond stemming from the mill era. Moving southward toward Little Compton, Tiverton becomes less developed and more rural in character.



old handsome house(s)

*Tiverton has a great architectural heritage*

After World War II, north Tiverton began to suburbanize. Homes were constructed with Veterans Housing Administration financed mortgages, summer bungalows developed around Stafford Pond and at High Hill in south Tiverton. *The 1970's era saw the conversion of farms into residential subdivisions and the construction of major public works, such as the Tiverton High School, Middle School and the Tiverton Police Station.*

*The early 1990's were a period of moderate residential growth with little change in the rural character and scenic beauty of Tiverton. In 1997, the proposed development of 70 to 80 houses to be built on the "Matta Farm", a 230 acre parcel of farm and woodland in south Tiverton, provided impetus for the establishment of the Tiverton Land Trust, a private non-profit organization devoted to preserving open space. Through a coalition of private fund-raising and a consortium of public and private agencies (RI Department of Environmental Management, Newport Water Authority, Audubon Society through the Federal Wildlife Protection Act and the Nature Conservancy) the property was acquired as permanent open space, and is now known as Pardon Gray Preserve.*

*In the late 1990's, the town also took advantage of a state law allowing a portion of the real estate transfer tax to be set aside in a fund used to purchase open space, if the voters of the given town or city approve (Tiverton residents ratified the open space fund at a Financial Town Meeting). By the time the new century began, the town's scenic and rural qualities, much of it related to its success in open space preservation, in combination with low land prices as compared to other Rhode Island communities, made it very attractive for residential development. Tiverton began to experience strong development pressure, which has continued through the time of the 2005-06 comprehensive plan update.*

The waterfront continues to be important to the community. The fishing docks near the Nanaquaket Bridge and along Riverside Drive are still home base to many commercial fishermen and shellfishermen. *The Stone Bridge Task Force, made up of representatives from various groups and commissions, focuses on physical improvements to the area, including administration of a state Department of Transportation grant in 2004 to design improvements to the aesthetics and functioning of Main Road and the waterfront from Riverside Drive south to Stone Bridge.*



*Tiverton's active waterfront*

## **2.2 Regional and Local Context**

The Town of Tiverton is part of the East Bay area of Rhode Island. The town borders the farming community of Westport, Massachusetts to the east and bucolic Little Compton to its south. To the north lies the historic mill city of Fall River. Its western boundary is formed by the Sakonnet River and Mount Hope Bay. Across the Sakonnet River is Aquidneck Island, which exerts major economic influence on the region.

Route 24, *with three interchanges in the northern portion of Tiverton*, connects with Route 195 to the north and the Mount Hope Bridge and Newport to the south. Tiverton is approximately 25 miles from the City of Providence, 15 miles from Newport, 25 miles from New Bedford to the east, and 55 miles from Boston to the north. Route 195 is a major highway that serves Cape Cod and southeastern Massachusetts.

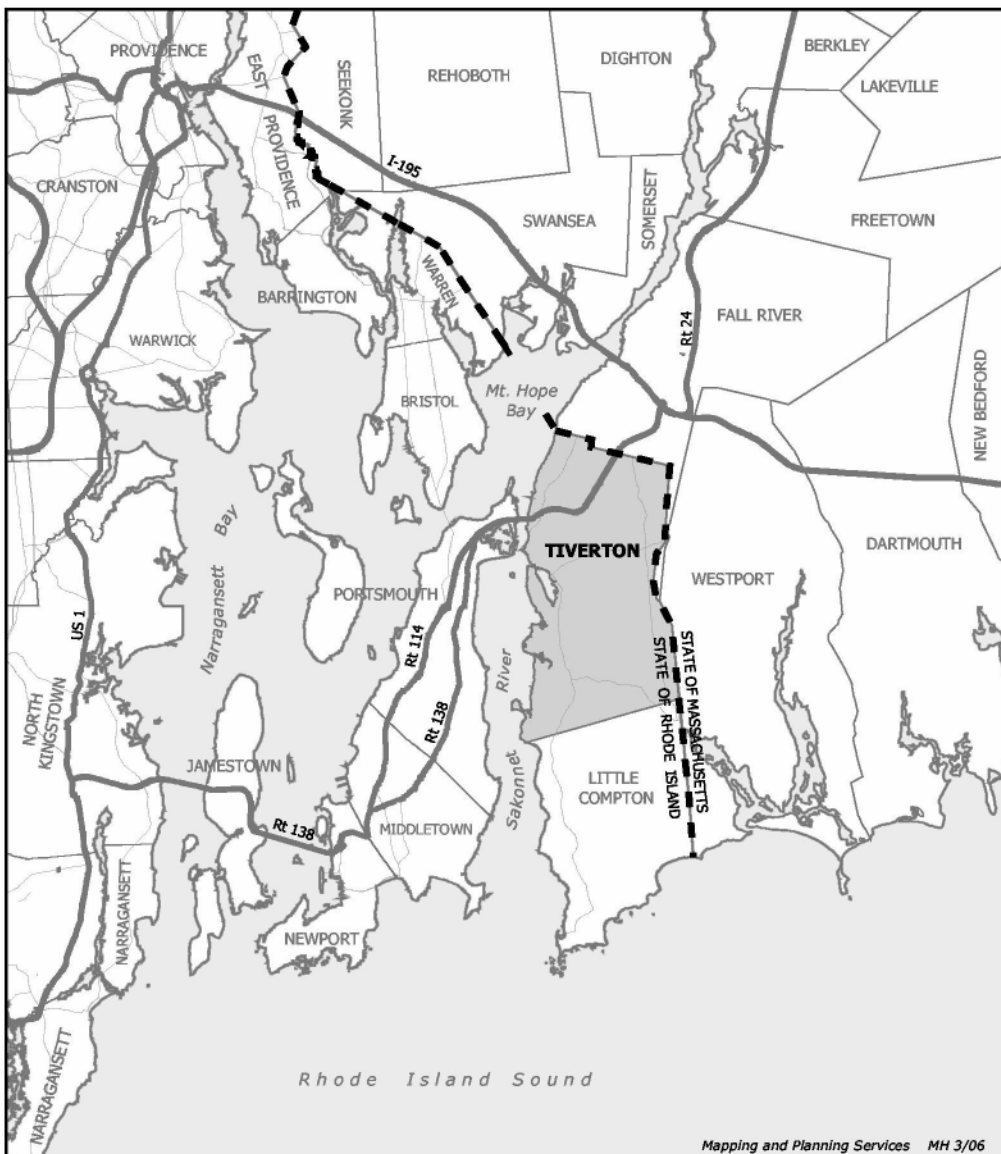
Figure 2-1 shows the local and regional context of the town. This location, on the expanding edge of a major population center, has contributed to Tiverton's evolution from a community of farming and fishing, to a suburban residential area with regional recreational resources. Development within the town has been shaped by this regional location, with areas of denser development spreading from Fall River to the north. South Tiverton has *been* essentially rural in character, *although residential subdivisions have begun to suburbanize this part of town.*

*The scenic rural character and beaches of southern Tiverton and Little Compton are a destination for day-trippers during the summer months. The attraction of south Tiverton and Little Compton as a recreation location is likely to continue. As a residential location Tiverton offers many advantages. The natural beauty of its shoreline, its rural and historic character, the availability of land, the relative affordability of housing as compared to the Boston regional market, and the proximity to employment centers within the region contribute to this attractiveness. By the late 1990's and early 2000's Tiverton was experiencing strong residential growth in the form of new subdivisions and major housing projects (see Land Use Chapter).*

Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island benefited from great economic growth in the 1980's. Defense industries in Portsmouth, Middletown and Newport, and the military installations in Newport and Middletown, have contributed to past economic surges. The future regional economic picture, which would contribute to additional growth in Tiverton, *is strong; the town is now part of a regional marketplace located on a major trading corridor. New York, Providence, Boston and Cape Cod are built out, and developers, particularly retail developers, are looking for places to expand. Tiverton has inexpensive and available land, and access by way of Route 24, to make it a regional attraction. These development pressures, along with the needs and desires of town residents, will determine the extent and type of future commercial development. In response, the town must have clear guidelines in the Comprehensive Community Plan, and in its accompanying zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, to manage growth so that the essential character of the town is not lost.*

### **2.3 Population Trends and Characteristics**

*According to the 2000 Census, Tiverton's population is 15,260; this is an increase of 6.6 percent from the 1990 population of 14,312. As seen in Table 2-1, which shows the Census counts from 1950 to 2000, a period in which the population nearly tripled, Tiverton experienced its greatest population growth in the decade 1950-1960, when population increased by almost 70 percent. This was a trend typical of communities in the post World War II years. In the decades after 1960, growth slowed, but it is expected to continue at steady levels through the next two decades.*



Source Data courtesy of MassGIS, RIGIS and MAGIC.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN  
**Figure 2-1**  
**REGIONAL and**  
**LOCAL CONTEXT**

**TABLE 2-1**  
**Population Trends, 1950-2000**

**Tiverton**

<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>
5,659	9,461	+67%	12,559	+33%	13,526	+7.7%	14,321	+5.9%	15,260	+6.6%

**Newport County**

<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Change</u>
60,807	81,405	+34%	94,228	+16%	81,383	-13.6%	87,194	+7.1%	85,433	-2.0%

**Source:** U.S. Census

Tiverton's growth since 1970 has been moderate compared to the dramatic changes experienced by its surrounding communities. *Newport and Middletown have been impacted by large fluctuations in military personnel. Newport has consistently lost population since 1960, most significantly between 1960 and 1980 (nearly 18,000 persons, or 40% of its population). Middletown also experienced a significant loss between 1970 and 1980, which was offset somewhat by growth between 1980 and 1990, but like Newport, lost population in the most recent decade (back to 1980 levels). The loss of population in these two communities explains why there is a net loss in the county of 2% despite growth in the other towns. Like Tiverton, Middletown and Portsmouth, and to a lesser degree Little Compton, are experiencing residential subdivision activity; this means that countywide, while urban units are being lost, suburban units are being added.*

**Population Projections**

Population projections prepared by the Rhode Island *Statewide Planning Program* in 2004 up to the year 2030 predict that Tiverton's growth will continue slowly, only about 10 percent over a 30-year period. By 2015 the population is expected to grow to 16,006; and by 2030 it is expected to reach 16,841. The slow growth is attributed to the aging population and decreasing family size, two national trends that are already evident in Tiverton.

*However, if Tiverton's population grows at about the same rate as the last three decades (an average of 6.7%), by 2020 its population would be almost 18,000 persons. The continued growth in new housing will increase this population expansion further. For example, in 2004-2005, subdivision applications before the Planning Board, in various stages of review, suggest that nearly 200 single family housing units will be added in the next few years. Although many of Tiverton's ongoing residential developments are in the "over 55" category (see Housing Chapter) the more recent subdivision activity represents a potential increase in the school age population.*

## **Age Characteristics**

*According to the 2000 Census, the median age for Tiverton residents is 40.8 years. In 1990 it was calculated at 37.2 years, in 1980, 33.6 years, indicating a gradual aging trend. Between 1990 and 2000 Tiverton lost population in the age group between 15 and 34 years, meaning there was an out-migration within the late teen to young adult cohorts (groups containing persons sharing demographic or age characteristics). Despite population loss in the younger cohort (25-34 years) the dominant age group is between 25 and 54 years, which makes up 44.6 percent of the total population.*

*About 16.5 percent of the total population is age 65 or older; in 1990, it was 14.3 percent. While this does not seem significant as an increase in overall percentage, the actual total number of persons in this age bracket increased by 22.7 percent between 1990 and 2000 -- as compared to the overall population increase of 6.6 percent. The number of school age children is also increasing, as a percentage as well as in total numbers. In 1990, the two cohorts making up the age group between 5 and 14 years represented 12.3 percent of the population; in 2000 they were 13.1 percent. This was a growth of nearly 14 percent in total numbers (again as compared to overall population increase in Tiverton of 6.6%).*

*These figures show that if Tiverton did not experience the out-migration of young adults, it would expect a higher rate of overall population growth. Also worth noting is that over time the older cohorts become greater components of the population, which reflects the fact that not only are families smaller but people are living longer. Because the growth in the oldest cohorts will likely continue to outpace that of the youngest, in the future there will be more focus on the housing and service needs of an older population.*

## **Household Characteristics**

Declining household size is the second major national trend clearly reflected in Tiverton. The town's average persons per household declined from 2.94 in 1980 to 2.69 in 1990, and declined again to 2.51 in 2000. In 2000, the Census counted 6,077 households, up from 5,323 in 1990. Note: the number of households varies from the number of household units counted in the Census (see Housing Chapter) because of a number of vacant and seasonal or recreational units.

## **Income**

*The 2000 Census shows that Tiverton's median household income is \$49,977; while this compares favorably with the state median income of \$42,090, it is the lowest median income of all the communities in Newport County with the exception of the City of Newport (\$40,669). Little Compton, Portsmouth, Middletown and Jamestown all have somewhat higher median incomes, with Jamestown's the highest at \$63,073. A discussion of median income and how it relates to the cost of housing is contained in the Housing Chapter.*

The 2000 Census also shows an individual poverty rate of 4.5 percent (reduced from the 5.6 percent level of 1990). This again compares favorably with the overall state poverty rate of 11 percent and Newport's, which is very high at 14.4 percent, as well as Middletown's, which is 5 percent (Jamestown's is very low at 2.9%).

**TABLE 2-2**  
**Median Household Income, 1980 - 2000**

<b><u>Town</u></b>	<b><u>1980 Median Income</u></b>	<b><u>1990 Median Income</u></b>	<b><u>2000 Median Income</u></b>
Tiverton	\$19,678	\$36,170	\$49,977
Little Compton	\$21,130	\$41,187	\$55,368
Portsmouth	\$21,539	\$42,474	\$58,835
Rhode Island	\$19,44	\$32,181	\$42,090

Source: U.S. Census

### **Educational Attainment**

*About 79.5 percent of residents aged 25 years or older had graduated from high school as measured by the 2000 Census (up from 70.5 percent as measured by the 1990 Census), with 24 percent obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher (up from 19.1 percent as measured by the 1990 Census). This is roughly equivalent to the educational attainment measured for the state as a whole. However, the other Newport County communities all have significantly higher rates of educational attainment, including Newport (87 percent with a high school degree and 41.5 percent with a college degree, respectively).*

### **Employment**

*According to the 2000 Census Tiverton's labor force was comprised of 8,247 persons. Of that number, 33.6 percent were employed as professionals, 29.7 percent in sales and office occupations, 15 percent in service occupations, 10.6 percent in production or transportation, 10.5 percent in construction or maintenance occupations and only 0.6 percent in farming, fishing or forestry. The managerial and professional sector is lower in Tiverton than it is for both Newport County and the State of Rhode Island.*

*The large majority of Tiverton residents find their employment opportunities outside of the community. While the people of Tiverton seem generally content to work outside of town there is some interest in encouraging small businesses and commercial development to improve the tax base and create employment opportunities. There is a very clear consensus, however, that the character of the community must not be sacrificed in the process.*

### 3.0 PLANNING CONCEPT (*italics represent changes to current plan*)

#### 3.1 The Nature of Tiverton: Issues and Opportunities

Tiverton is in a time of change, more today than ever before in its history. Physically, the town is changing from a tidy rural New England town into a more suburban community. Tiverton's residents are also changing from a population with deep roots in the community, whose livelihoods were based on fishing and farming, to a growing newly arrived population whose jobs take them outside the town. Development is increasing, as have pressures on the remaining open space and historic buildings.

Tiverton faces a number of development issues, many of which were identified in the comprehensive plan workshops. Some of these concern the day-to-day operation of the town. Others have to do with the basic structure of land use and *future* physical development. The Comprehensive *Community* Plan focuses on those issues, as well as opportunities that relate to the present and future character, and the improvement of the community and its resources.

The special character of Tiverton is derived from the interrelationship among the basic functions and unique qualities of the community. This *special character* forms the conceptual basis for the Comprehensive *Community* Plan. These are the aspects of the town that will continue into the long-term future and should be reinforced through this planning effort. Four basic functions can be identified: a **unique environment**, a **waterfront town**, a **residential community**, and a **location for business opportunities**.

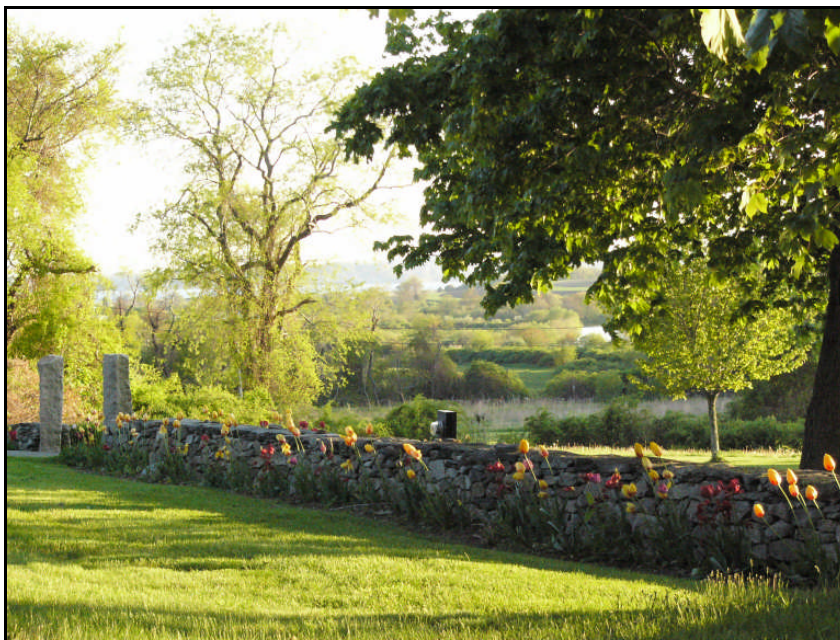
##### A Unique Environment

The location of the town, its historical development, and the quality of its natural features are unique factors of Tiverton today and will affect the character of Tiverton tomorrow. The conservation of those natural and historic features is crucial if Tiverton is to maintain its integrity and avoid becoming a faceless suburb.

The following are the major issues and opportunities that *constitute* this unique environment:

- Ground and Surface Water: Since the lifeblood of the community, the drinking water supply, comes from resources within the town, the protection of those resources is of crucial importance. Stafford Pond, one of the area's *major* public water resources, faces a *continuing* contamination *threat* from failed septic systems and recreational use. Both the quality of the current supply and potential sources for future water need to be protected. The administrative structure of existing water districts, and the ownership and use of watershed land are also issues. The need to *continue* a public education program on environmental protection has been identified as *crucial in dealing with these issues, as are specific steps such as a program for the inspection and maintenance of septic systems within the watershed.*

- **Wetlands:** Wetlands play an important role in the community for flood control and water storage, and as wildlife habitat. They are among the predominant natural features of the town, and monitoring the enforcement of existing wetlands protection regulations is an important concern.
- **Solid Waste Management:** Although the town landfill solves the immediate problem of solid waste disposal, the town must consider future alternatives. *A committee appointed by the Town Council is exploring the possibility of extending the life of the landfill by expanding its acreage. If the existing landfill is to remain open for its potential life, additional funding will be required. An alternative is to close the landfill and replace it with a transfer station. In addition, the Firestone Dump on Brayton Road has been identified as a possible Super Fund clean up site.*
- **Visual Quality:** *The visual quality of the town's commercial areas is a major concern. New construction of a chain retail building on Main Road in north Tiverton has led to demands that design standards be developed for additional commercial enterprises on the main commercial corridors in Tiverton. In 2005 the town initiated a design standards project to set building and site design criteria for new development in all commercial districts in town.*
- **Open Space/Farmland:** The loss of open space through development alters the character of the town. Additional open areas are needed in developed areas. Farmland is a special open space resource with both aesthetic and economic value to the town. *Farmers, particularly those with five to ten acres, will benefit from the assistance of a Small Business Association to identify available resources to survive and thrive in the agricultural community.*



*Farms and fields contribute to Tiverton's unique environment*

- **Historic and Scenic Character:** Tiverton's historic buildings and areas are the core of the town's character. Old buildings are particularly vulnerable to loss, yet the town has neither a regulatory nor an advisory mechanism for their preservation. *Tiverton has lost many historic sites and could lose more without the means to make their protection a priority. In the absence of historic district zoning, a historic preservation advisory committee composed of interested citizens could assist owners of historic properties.*

Many areas of Tiverton have a particular scenic quality derived from the rural landscape, such as mature trees, stone walls and rural roadways. The protection of these elements is a concern. These *irreplaceable* resources should be identified and protected. Future road and bridge improvements should be done with consideration of their rural location and character. Views from heights of land to the waterfront are particularly attractive and should be protected in future development. *The restoration of the Seapowet Bridge, using timber instead of concrete, and designed to a size acceptable to nearby residents, is an example of citizen input that should be replicated in future planning for infrastructure.*



*Many of Tiverton's roadways are considered scenic*

- **Recreational Resources:** While the town has several parks and recreation areas, many of these *have the potential to be better developed and utilized.* Small play areas should be located within areas of denser development. There are no walking paths to link these resources to the residential community. *There are some extensive trails systems, including those in Weetamoo Woods and Pardon Gray Preserve, and there have been some efforts to develop bikeways in town. While a proposal to establish a bicycle route along scenic roadways in southern Tiverton did not develop beyond the design study phase, the Department of Transportation has funded a pedestrian and bicycle enhancement project in the Stone Bridge area and along Main Road north to Riverside Drive. The Newport and Old Colony Railroad right-of-way remains viable for future use as a bikeway and pedestrian path.*

*There is no comprehensive plan for implementing designated coastal rights-of-way. In addition, town beaches are used heavily by residents of Massachusetts and the Town Council has enacted higher non-resident access fees that can be used to fund improvements to these facilities.*

## **A Waterfront Town**

As a waterfront community, Tiverton has special problems and opportunities. The waterfront serves sometimes conflicting economic, recreational, environmental and historic functions. There are threats to the waterfront's character, including over-development, commercialization, excessive or inappropriate moorings and environmental degradation from a lack of enforcement of existing regulations. Tiverton's waterfront can be viewed as three areas: the scenic coastal bluffs and beaches *along the Sakonnet River*; the coastal marshes and ponds, such as Fogland, Seapowet, Nanaquaket and Nonquit; and the harbor basin at Stone Bridge and Bridgeport.

- Coastal and Environmental Resource Management: The scenic, natural coastline is a crucial element of Tiverton's character. The combination of beaches, shellfish beds and fishing areas, salt marshes and ponds serve to maintain the natural balance and function as *a natural and economic resource* for the town. The water quality of the Sakonnet River is a regional concern, which *is regulated by the state*. However, the town can *monitor* such local concerns as septic wash from riverfront homes and discharge from boats, silting around private docks, *and regulate use* of all-terrain vehicles (ATV's) *and jet skis, etc.*
- Harbor Management: The Tiverton harbor is a very special resource. The area functions as a beach, a mooring and dock site, a fishing ground, a location of homes, and a visual resource to the community. To enable these uses to coexist, the town has prepared a harbor management plan. *The plan identifies the urgent need to protect the harbor basin by reinforcing the Stone Bridge abutment in a visually attractive manner.*
- Waterfront Land Uses: *While much of Tiverton's waterfront remains an authentic mixed-use area with many waterfront dependent uses, there have been some significant changes since the Comprehensive Community Plan was first developed. The former oil tank farm north of the Sakonnet River Bridge has been dismantled, the site remediated and developed into the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, a 290 unit age restricted townhouse development with some commercial uses and a small marina. The Stone Bridge Inn was razed and replaced with a small commercial plaza. There is much interest in maintaining the small-scale integrity of the waterfront districts in the north part of town. In particular, the Stone Bridge Improvement Task Force developed plans to beautify the Stone Bridge area and make the harbor and shoreline more accessible. Also of interest is future public use of the Newport and the Old Colony Railroad right-of-way, which provides a waterfront corridor to Fall River.*



*Fogland Beach is a popular site for swimming, fishing and boating*

### **A Residential Community**

Tiverton is and will remain a desirable place to live. Yet, the quality of the residential environment, and the availability of a range of housing for present and future generations, needs to be addressed. Major issues concern the preservation of existing housing, the types of housing provided, housing costs, the quality of town services *and the rate at which land is being developed into residential subdivisions.*

- **Housing Preservation:** The maintenance of existing units is a key concern in north Tiverton and the older areas of town. Also of concern is the maintenance and preservation of the historic and architecturally significant residential buildings located throughout the town.
- **Housing Variety:** Tiverton has developed as a suburban residential location, and the principal form of housing is the single family detached residence. While this housing is adequate for growing families, it can be burdensome for the elderly, small families, single person households and others. There is concern for increasing the variety of housing to serve residents in all stages of life, *although some progress has been made. In addition to low income elderly apartments on Hancock Street consisting of 96 subsidized units (see Housing Chapter), Tiverton now has two age restricted housing projects. One is the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, a high end development, and the other is Countryview Estates in northeast Tiverton, which will provide 269 manufactured homes, meeting a demand for moderately priced housing.*
- **Housing Costs:** *There remains a substantial gap between the cost of housing and the ability of most residents to pay. The town must confront the need to preserve existing low cost units, and provide for future housing affordability as well as a healthy range of types for residents seeking to move up in the housing market. In particular there is a strong need for affordable housing for families of low and moderate incomes.*

- **Community Services:** The town must provide services to support the residential community. The availability of public safety services and the quality of the school system has direct bearing on the desirability of the town as a residential location. There are logistical issues *to be addressed* concerning fire protection and ambulance services, *and the school system infrastructure*. Administrative issues related to town management led to the *creation of a position* for a full-time town administrator.

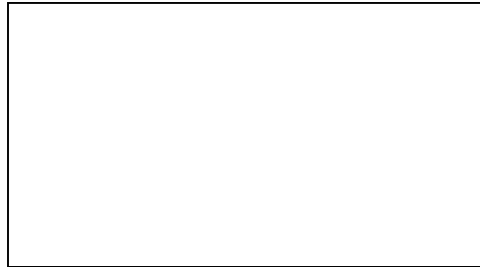
### **A Location of Business Opportunities**

Tiverton serves as a location for neighborhood, community-oriented and family-owned businesses, and for a few small industries. The Bourne Mill is a testament to a previous industrial heritage that was linked to the historic mills in Fall River. Even today, commercial services and industry for the most part are provided by surrounding towns. Commercial development is located in few locations, along Main Road in north Tiverton, along the waterfront in Stone Bridge, and at several crossroads areas. Regional shopping centers are located in nearby communities. The majority of the town's workers are employed regionally. Most of the tax revenue in town is generated by residential uses with the burden disproportionately cast on an aging population.

Tiverton is well-located for commercial and industrial development and significant areas are zoned for general commercial or industrial uses. These areas have direct access to the regional transportation network. The lack of other infrastructure, particularly sewers, and natural features constraints are the major factors inhibiting these forms of development. *The Tiverton Economic Development Plan, which was completed in 2003, included a market analysis to identify opportunities for businesses in town, as well as a public outreach component during which residents expressed concern with the proliferation of commercial sprawl incompatible with the town's historic, rural and scenic character. The plan resulted in recommendations to balance economic development with protection of the town character and quality of life, including the development of commercial design standards for new development.*

- **Commercial Development:** The urban retail strip along Main Road in north Tiverton is generally underutilized and could benefit from *a revitalization plan*. The remaining commercial areas are characterized by strip development with confusing signage, numerous driveways and expansive parking areas. These features are not only unattractive, but decrease the efficiency of the roadways where they are located. *Comprehensive design standards are needed* to regulate the proper intensity of uses, provide visual buffers and other landscape features; *a commercial design standards project, including standards for building design, was underway in Tiverton in 2005.*
- **Industrial Development:** The Tiverton Industrial/Technology Park at the intersection of Route 24 and Fish Road offers the opportunity to generate jobs and *diversify* the tax base. A substantial area in north Tiverton is also zoned for industry, but is underutilized. Conflicts between industrial uses and the residential character of the *surrounding* area need to be resolved. A review of all industrial property needs to be conducted to optimize industrial development within the overall land use plan.

- Agriculture: The historic function of agriculture as a major economic endeavor has eroded in *the past few generations*. However, *although farmland is being sold for housing developments*, some residents still earn *an* income from agricultural activities. The protection *and encouragement* of this component of the local economy is important.



*Main Road in north Tiverton is the location of many retail businesses*

### **3.2 General Planning Goals**

#### **Goal 1:**

**Utilize the Comprehensive *Community Plan* as a guide to future growth and change within the town.**

The citizens of Tiverton are justifiably proud of their town, and protective of the physical and social qualities, which characterize it as unique. Yet, there is considerable discussion of how the community should develop. Development pressures throughout the town are expected to continue. The town should leverage these pressures in a manner consistent with the common good, guided by the perspective of this Comprehensive *Community Plan*.

#### **Goal 2:**

**Promote unity within the town and encourage continued community participation in decisions concerning future development.**

The comprehensive planning process has been the opportunity for citizens *from all areas of town* to identify common purposes in the town. The planning process used in the preparation of this Comprehensive *Community Plan* is a *positive example of* community representation and participation in decisions concerning planning and development in the town.

**Goal 3:**

**Preserve and protect the intimate scale and character of the town as qualities that provide a *connection between the citizens and the businesses and government that serve them.***

The rural, small town character of Tiverton has been identified as one of its most important qualities. This character is not only reflected in the physical aspects of the community, but also in the close, person-to-person relationships of the people who live and work here, and the accessibility of the town's government to those governed.



*The staff at Tiverton Town Hall works hard for the citizens*

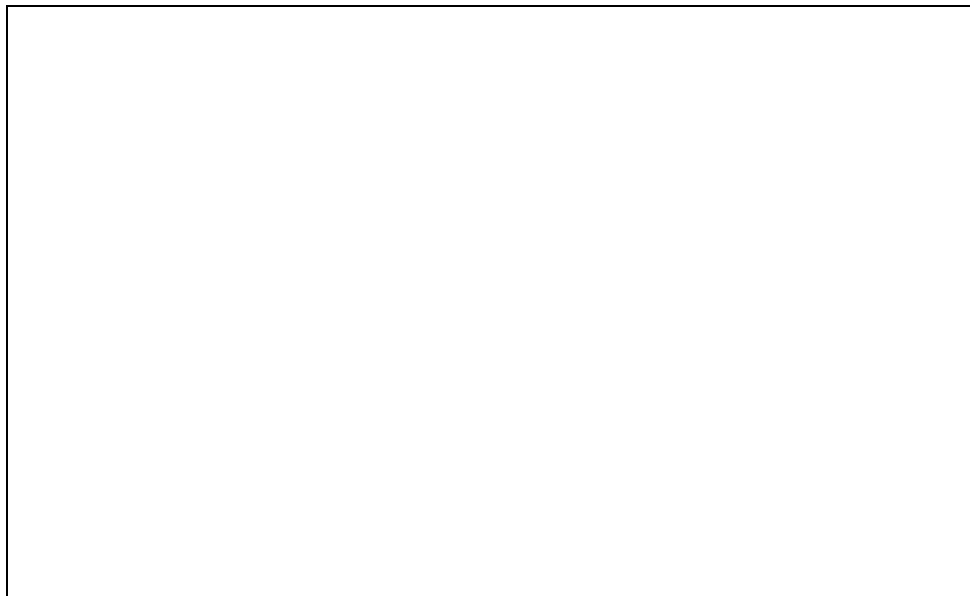
### **3.3 A Vision for Tiverton**

It is the intent of *the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan* to present a vision for the future of the town, which combines opportunities for growth and change with the need for preservation of the essential characteristics of the community. This is an integrated vision for the town, and does not substitute for the more specific Future Land Use Plan found in Chapter 5 (*Figure 5-4*). The following is a description of major components of this plan:

- **Watershed Protection:** The protection of the sources of the town's water supply is a major concern. Protection areas should be reinforced around Stafford Pond and Nonquit Pond.
- **Residential Growth:** *Future residential growth, while providing for affordable housing opportunities throughout town, should consist of greater density and varying housing styles in north Tiverton, and less dense and rural residential style developments in south Tiverton.*

- Commercial Area Refinement: The utilization of the Main Road commercial area in north Tiverton should be improved by an active program of commercial revitalization. Other areas of commercial development should be inventoried and officially established. Development design standards should be prepared to improve the efficiency and appearance of the Main Road and other neighborhood commercial areas.
- Rural Residential/Agriculture: The rural character of south Tiverton should be preserved with low density residential, *developed according to the principals of conservation design*. Agricultural activities, which contribute to the economic base of this area, should be protected. *The Farm, Forest and Open Space taxation program is an important tool to encourage the preservation of open space.*
- Contextual Development: Compatible development which closely matches the existing historic and architectural fabric should be encouraged in *all areas of town, particularly* the areas of Stone Bridge, Nanaquaket, Puncateest/Fogland and Tiverton Four Corners. Techniques should be developed to encourage the preservation of existing buildings and to discourage demolition.
- Industrial: *Land zoned for industrial uses* should be developed in a high quality *manner* with adequate infrastructure and support services. Design guidelines should be produced for areas of commercial and industrial development.
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas: Environmentally sensitive areas are protected by state and federal regulatory systems. The town should monitor compliance as part of the subdivision review process.
- Scenic Shoreline: The natural features, beaches, cliffs and scenic vistas of the shorefront should be protected from over-development. Design standards to protect scenic values should be developed and included as a criterion for approval of developments.
- Harbor Management: The harbor management plan for the Tiverton Basin encourages the incorporation of water-dependent and related uses along waterfront land; *supportive land-side regulations and available parking should be pursued at the same time as the necessary physical improvements to protect the basin.*
- Town Center: The town should develop a new municipal center which consolidates many of the municipal functions inadequately housed in the existing town hall and other buildings. The municipal center could incorporate the town library, town court, and an auditorium for town meetings, in addition to municipal offices. *In 2004 the town completed the Tiverton Town Center Planning Study to guide the future development of underdeveloped land in the center of town.*

- Open Space Network: A comprehensive open space plan should be developed which includes recreation areas, conservation areas, a scenic roadway system and a bike-hike system.
- Visual Buffers: The natural landscape along Route 24 should be preserved as a visual buffer from future development. A protective buffer should be established between residential and commercial uses.
- Sewer Connections: *Sewer expansion should be restricted to existing developed areas of town where septic and cesspool systems are failing and where new individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS) are inappropriate because of soil type or lot size. Sewers should not be expanded merely to accommodate new subdivisions or the development of small lots that are not buildable due to ISDS constraints.*
- Gateways: Special design consideration should be given for transitional areas into the community. Five such "gateway" areas are *identified* - two in north Tiverton and three at the Route 24 exits. Secondary gateway areas exist at Bulgarmarsh Road from Westport and on the Main Road from Little Compton.
- Rail Right-of-way: The existing rail right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railroad should be preserved for future use as a transportation and infrastructure corridor.



*New residential development in Tiverton must include affordable homes*

The following *chapters* elaborate on these concepts in the context of the goals, objectives and policies of the Tiverton Comprehensive *Community Plan*.

#### **4.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES** (*italics represent changes to current plan*)

##### **4.1 The Special Character of Tiverton**

More than anything else, the abundance of natural resources and the town's cultural roots in its past characterize what is special about Tiverton. Farms, broad open spaces, forests and miles of scenic roadways in the south, and the rich ethnic and architectural heritage in the north give the town its fascinating diversity. Along the west side lies the beauty of an unspoiled coastline, treed neighborhoods, while low lying heather, bogs and swamps alternate with farms and crossroads hamlets in the eastern portion of the town. These are all precious qualities of small town New England that are rapidly disappearing, and qualities that townspeople fear will be lost in Tiverton's future. A central challenge of this plan is to protect these natural and cultural resources while at the same time providing for economic growth and housing needs. This chapter of the Comprehensive Community Plan describes the town's natural and cultural resource assets, and those planning measures needed to preserve them.

##### **4.2 Natural Resources**

Tiverton's natural setting is not only beautiful, but it also creates its own brake on development. Extensive wetlands are protected by state and federal wetlands regulations, while many other areas are not suitable for development because of poor soil conditions for residential septic systems. With the town's Building Official, Planning Board and Conservation Commission monitoring construction activities and state regulatory efforts, development cannot occur in many areas of the town.

The following sections describe the key natural features of the town and the constraints they impose on future development. The information for this analysis has been compiled from many sources including the Rhode Island Geographic Information System, the U.S. Geological Survey, field observations and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

##### **Topography**

The surface relief consists of a gently rolling topography that rises from the waterfront to low bluffs along the Sakonnet River. Low lying wetland areas along the coast and inland occupy large areas of the town. Higher elevations are some 200 to 300 feet above sea level. The highest elevation is Pocasset Hill in north Tiverton at about 320 feet. This elevation forms part of a ridgeline that extends north along Main Road to Fall River roughly parallel to the Sakonnet.

The bluffs overlooking the Sakonnet River rise quickly from the waterfront in north Tiverton. Further south they are separated from the shoreline by a coastal plain that is up to one mile in width. These bluffs offer many scenic views of the Aquidneck Island. They also represent another obstacle to development because of ledge formations near the surface.

Along the coastal plain are several important natural features, including ponds, wetlands, marshes and beaches. A 100-year floodplain forms part of the coastal plain and extends from a narrow strip along the northern shoreline to a broader area in the south. Seapowet Marsh and the Emily Reucker Wildlife Preserve form part of this floodplain.



The Sakonnet River

## Soils

Soil conditions are particularly severe throughout the town due to poor drainage; and they are a major factor in any plan for development. An analysis of soils completed using the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service soil survey of Rhode Island showed that large areas of the town are unsuitable for many types of development, and particularly for septic systems. The RIGIS (Rhode Island Geographic Information System) analysis of soils, Figure 4-1, also indicates large areas with development constraints due to poor soil conditions.

## Fresh Water Resources

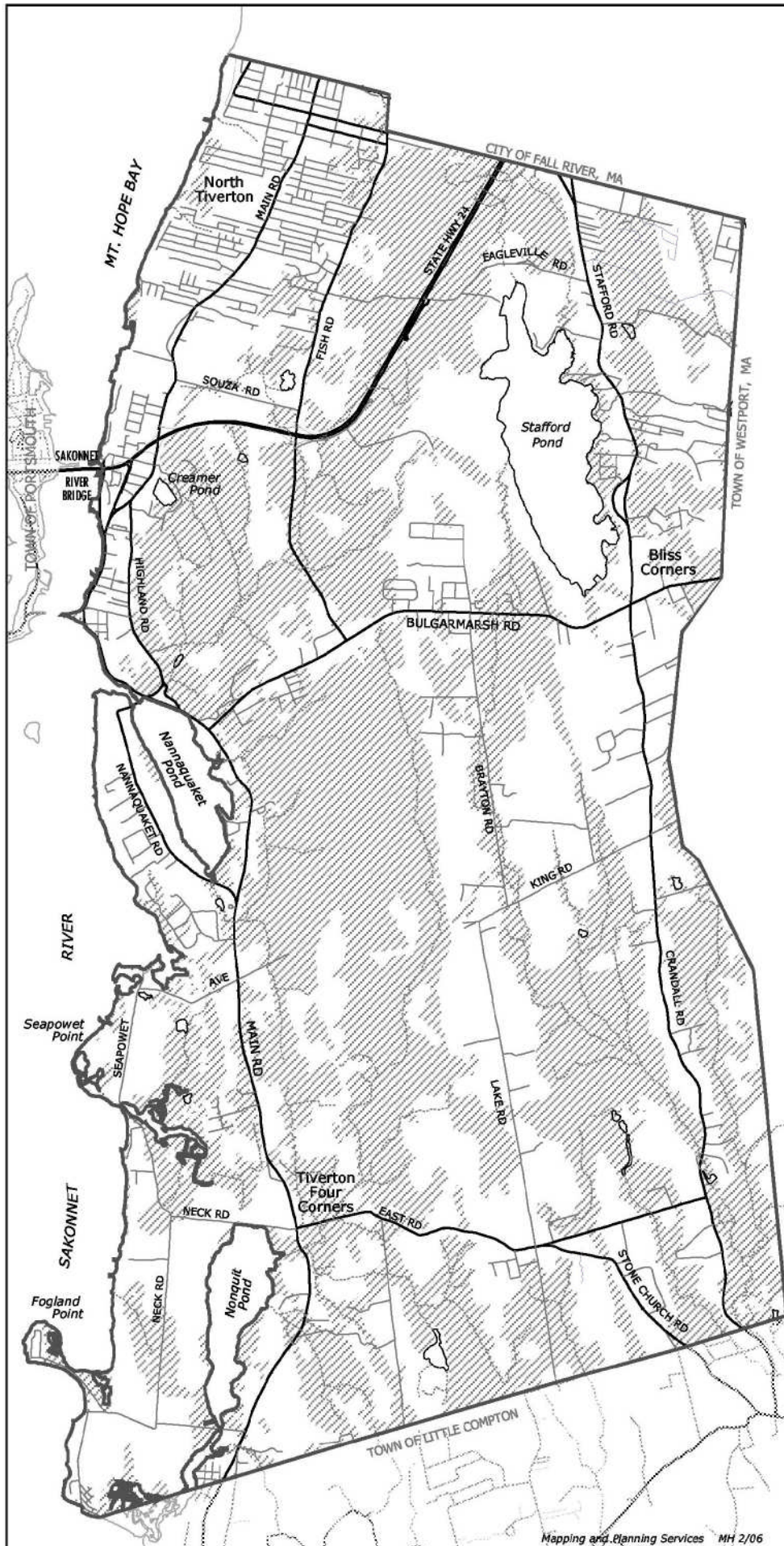
Surface water includes many small ponds and two relatively large ponds that are totally within Tiverton's geographic area. Stafford Pond is a primary source of the drinking water supply for Tiverton, Fall River and Portsmouth. *Although it lies within the Stafford Pond Watershed Overlay District, it is not fully protected because of ongoing recreational uses.* The protection of Stafford Pond and its watershed is a unique planning challenge because of growing development along its shores, the complexities of its ownership, long standing recreation use and the lack of a single overall management authority. *A comprehensive study initiated in 1996 by the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) identified two major sources of pollution - animal waste runoff from a dairy farm, and stormwater runoff from Stafford Road. Since then, "best management practices" (BMP's) have been established to control both sources of pollution. Moreover, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan has been implemented that sets a loading cap of 390 kg/yr of phosphorus entering the pond.*

# DRAFT

**CONSTRAINTS INCLUDE:**

- BEDROCK
- SLOPE  $\geq$  15%
- HYDRIC SOILS
- SEVERELY HIGH WATERTABLE (0-18 IN. DEPTH)
- SEASONAL HIGH WATERTABLE (19-42 IN. DEPTH)
- and ALL OTHER SEVERE CONSTRAINTS (ROCK, SAND, etc.)

Source: RIGIS Soils.



0 1 Mile

The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN



## Figure 4-1 SOILS CONSTRAINTS

*Other steps to protect Stafford Pond include the adoption of a town ordinance requiring mandatory testing of individual septic disposal systems around the pond, the publication and dissemination of a pamphlet entitled "Your Guide to Protecting Stafford Pond" and the proposed creation of a Stafford Pond Watershed Committee. The Watershed Protection Overlay District also includes a requirement that all on-site (individual) sewage disposal systems within the watershed be improved to the prevailing state and local standards by 2005. Nevertheless, the quality of water is still threatened by the widespread use of gasoline motors, jet skis, seaplanes, swimming and other recreational uses not compatible with a drinking water supply.*

Nonquit Pond is part of the City of Newport's water system. As a public water supply it is Tiverton's responsibility to take measures, in cooperation with the Newport Water District, to protect this pond and its watershed. *Since 1997, significant steps have been taken to protect approximately 1,320 acres of Nonquit Pond watershed through the purchase of development rights and the purchase and protection of fields, forests and wetlands, including Cedar Swamp in Weetamoo Woods and the Pardon Gray Preserve. Problematic, however, is the threat of contaminated leachate from the Tiverton Landfill. This landfill abuts Cedar Swamp and several private homes that rely on wells for drinking water. Results from test wells around the perimeter of the landfill indicate the presence of lead, cadmium, arsenic and other contaminants, but in trace amounts well within regulatory limits. In 2001, revisions to the town's zoning ordinance included adding the watershed of Nonquit Pond to the Watershed Protection Overlay District.*

Easily overlooked because it is unseen, is the groundwater of Tiverton. This precious natural resource is just as important as surface water because it also supplies major portions of the town with fresh water from private residential wells. Protecting groundwater sources and maintaining drinking water is a major public concern. The State of Rhode Island uses a system to classify groundwater. Class GA is used to identify drinking quality groundwater sources. The town should assure that this classification is maintained. Threatening this resource are aging underground oil tanks and failing septic systems. Both problems must be addressed if Tiverton's citizens are to be assured of pure drinking water in the future. *In 1997 the town adopted an ordinance requiring that all owners and operators of underground storage tanks (UST's) register the tanks with the Tiverton Town Clerk. The registration form includes such information as tank size, construction type and material, and contents.*

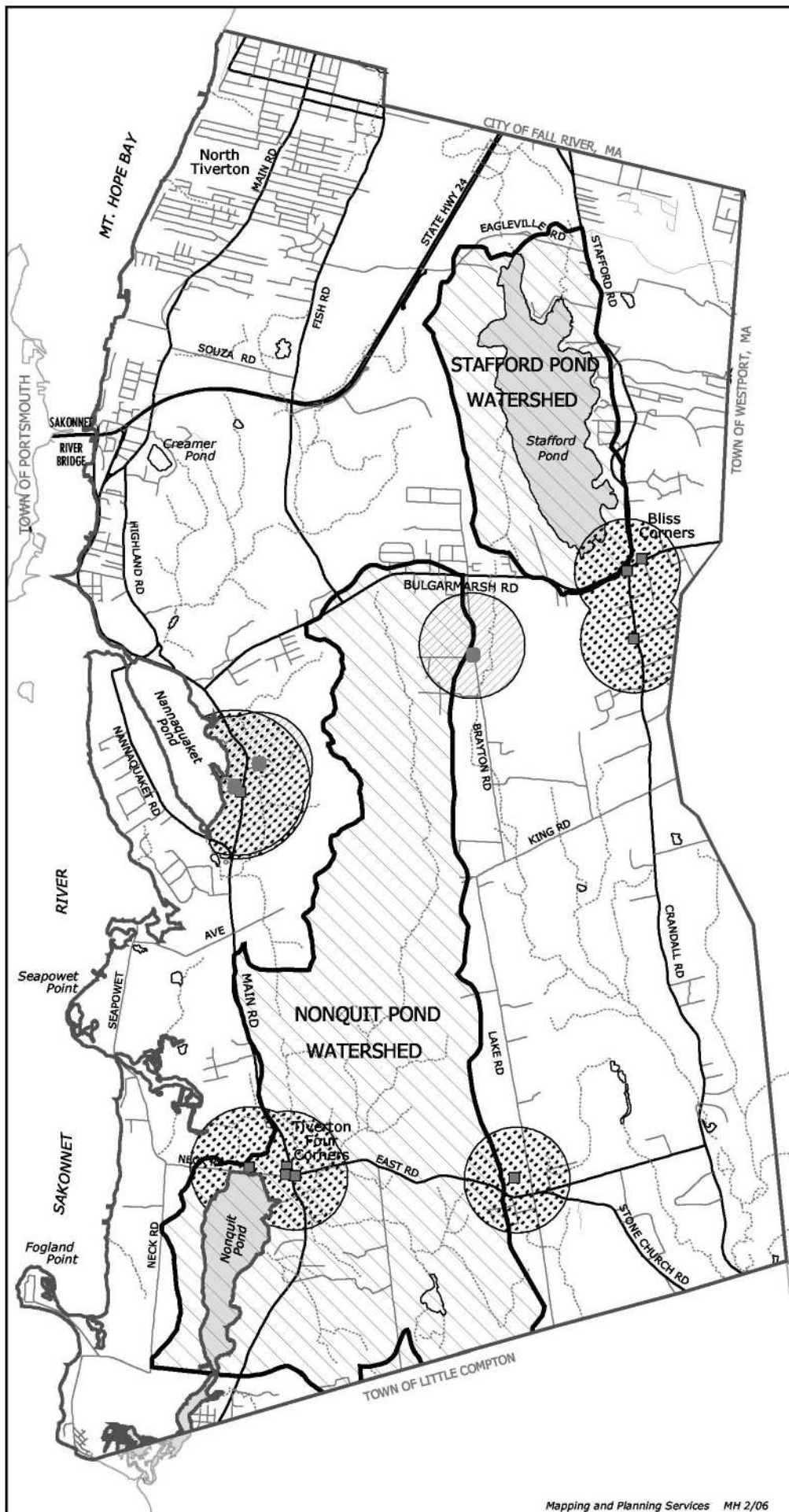
*The RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has delineated wellhead protection areas for all public wells in the state, which define those areas through which water flows in the subsurface to the well. Consistent with RIDEM's wellhead protection program, the Conservation Commission undertook a pollution source inventory for each wellhead protection area to determine potential risks to each well. This effort was followed by a public education program regarding the risks associated with UST's, disposal of household chemicals and septic system maintenance.*

*The watershed areas of both Stafford and Nonquit ponds, as well as the wellhead protection areas, are depicted in Figure 4-2.*

# DRAFT

- COMMUNITY WELL
- NON-COMMUNITY WELL
- ▨ SURFACE WATER RESERVOIR WATERSHED
- ▨ SURFACE WATER RESERVOIR
- ▨ COMMUNITY WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREA
- ▨ NON-COMMUNITY WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREA

Source: RIGIS/RIDEM 2005  
Wellhead Protection Areas.



The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN

**Figure 4-2  
WATER RESOURCES**



## Surface Mining

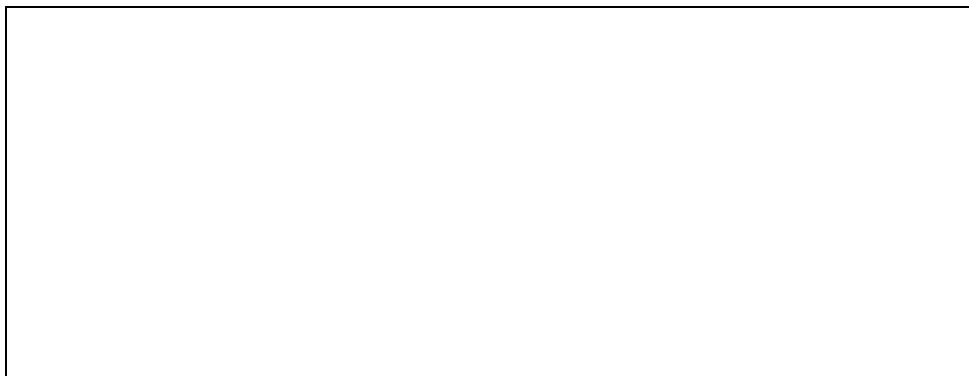
Surface mining operations of sand and gravel *will* adversely impact ground and surface water by eliminating the filtering capacity and rendering groundwater vulnerable to contamination. Removing deposits decreases the depth to groundwater often leading to exposure of the water table. The use of heavy machinery in these operations makes the water table susceptible to diesel fuel, motor oil, hydraulic fluids and solvents. *The zoning ordinance amendments of 2001 limit the expansion of existing surface mines and new operations are now a prohibited use.*

## Wetlands

Wetlands form a significant component of the land area of the town and are a major natural feature. Coastal wetlands comprise over 528 acres. These include large areas at Seapowet and Fogland Marshes. Inland wetlands comprise nearly 4,500 acres throughout the town. Major areas include Great Swamp and Cedar Swamp in south Tiverton, and Basket Swamp and Pocasset Cedar Swamp in the northern section of town. Wetland areas, *by categories*, are depicted in Figure 4-3.



*Seapowet Marsh is an extensive and scenic coastal wetland and wildlife habitat.*

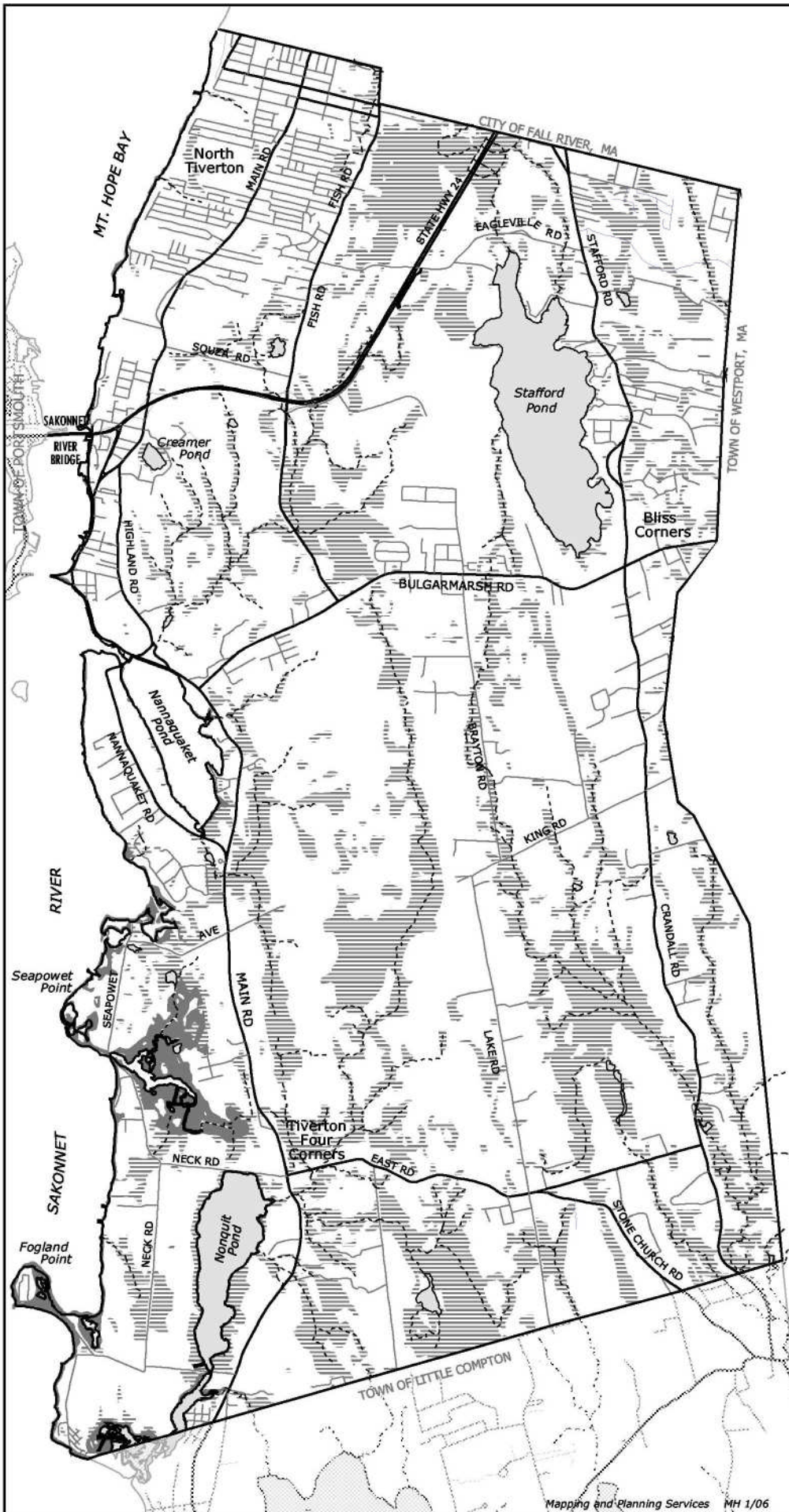


*Cedar Swamp is an integral part of the Weetamoo Woods and Pardon Gray Preserve.*

# DRAFT

-  STREAMS
-  OPEN WATER BODIES
-  COASTAL WETLANDS
-  INLAND WETLANDS

Source: RIGIS Wetlands based on 1988 airphoto interpretation. Minimum mapping unit 1/4 acre. Not an official wetlands determination. Classified by wetlands jurisdiction.



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COMMUNITY PLAN

**Figure 4-3  
WETLANDS**

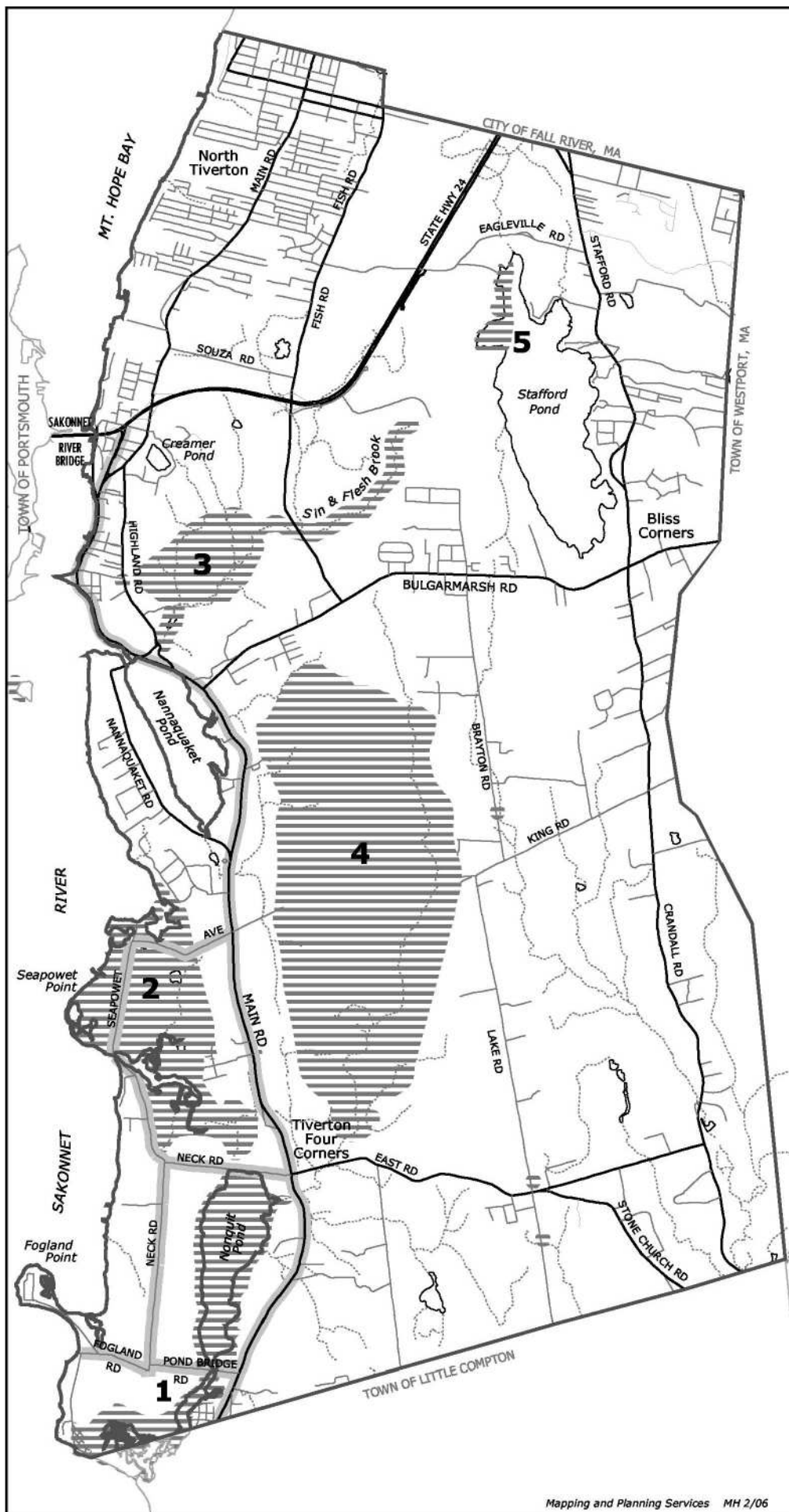


## Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program

The Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program is a section of the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Planning and Development. The basic goal of the program is to identify, protect and manage rare species occurrences and ecologically significant natural communities. The Natural Heritage Program has identified special rare species habitats. These areas, shown in Figure 4-4, are described below:

- **Fogland Marsh** is a Nature Conservancy preserve, with adjacent tracts owned by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. It is located on the Tiverton/Little Compton line, surrounding Almy Brook. This wetland is considered one of the best quality salt marshes in the state, never having been ditched or drained for mosquito control, and thus serves as a fertile nursery for fin and shellfish, and critical habitat for shorebirds and wading birds.
- **Seapowet Marsh** is primarily owned by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management with the Emily Reucker Wildlife Refuge, owned by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, lying just to the north. This exemplary wetland provides breeding habitat for two state listed rare bird species, and is an important feeding area for wading birds, including egrets and ibis which breed nearby.
- **Sin and Flesh Brook** is an area that provides important forest habitat for several bird species rare in Newport County. The maintenance of this large unfragmented forest is critical to its value as habitat for these species. A long-term plan for conservation of this area would include protection from development as well as the exclusion of roads, utility rights-of-way, and other interruptions of the forest canopy.
- **Weetamoo Woods and the Pardon Gray Preserve** are large areas south of Lafayette Road containing a unique oak/holly forest community and habitat for *five* state listed rare species. As threats by encroaching development have grown, the *town's Open Space Commission and the private Tiverton Land Trust have responded by protecting, through state open space funding and private funds*, several hundred acres. Additional acquisitions with appropriate management would further protect this site.
- **Stafford Pond** (*note: explanatory text needed*)

*In 2001, a study by The Nature Conservancy Rhode Island field office confirmed and expanded on the findings of the Natural Heritage Program. Entitled "A Conservation Plan for Wetlands and Associated Natural Resource Areas in Little Compton and Tiverton, R.I.", the study confirmed at least five state-listed rare species in the natural communities that make up the coastal forest of south Tiverton. They are (1) Acadian Flycatcher, (2) Eastern Ribbon Snake, (3) Henry's Elfin Butterfly, (4) Worm-eating Warbler, and (5) Squawroot.*



#### RARE SPECIES HABITAT AREAS:

- 1 FOGLAND MARSH
- 2 SEAPOWET MARSH
- 3 SIN AND FLESH BROOK
- 4 WEETAMOO WOODS / PARDON GRAY PRESERVE
- 5 STAFFORD POND

Sources: RIGIS/RIDEM Rare Species 1997 and Town of Tiverton 2006.  
Estimated habitat and range of rare species and noteworthy natural communities.

#### SCENIC ROADWAYS

# DRAFT



0 1 Mile

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**Figure 4-4**  
**NATURAL HERITAGE  
& SCENIC RESOURCES**

### 4.3 Cultural Resources

Cultural resources can be thought of as the human imprints on Tiverton that make it an interesting place to live--the archaeological treasures of its ancient past, the architectural treasures of its colonial past, its farmhouses, stone fences and villages. These give the town depth and texture, and must be held onto if Tiverton is to retain its uniqueness. Three important cultural resource areas are considered in this plan; rural character, scenic resources and historic resources.

#### Rural Character

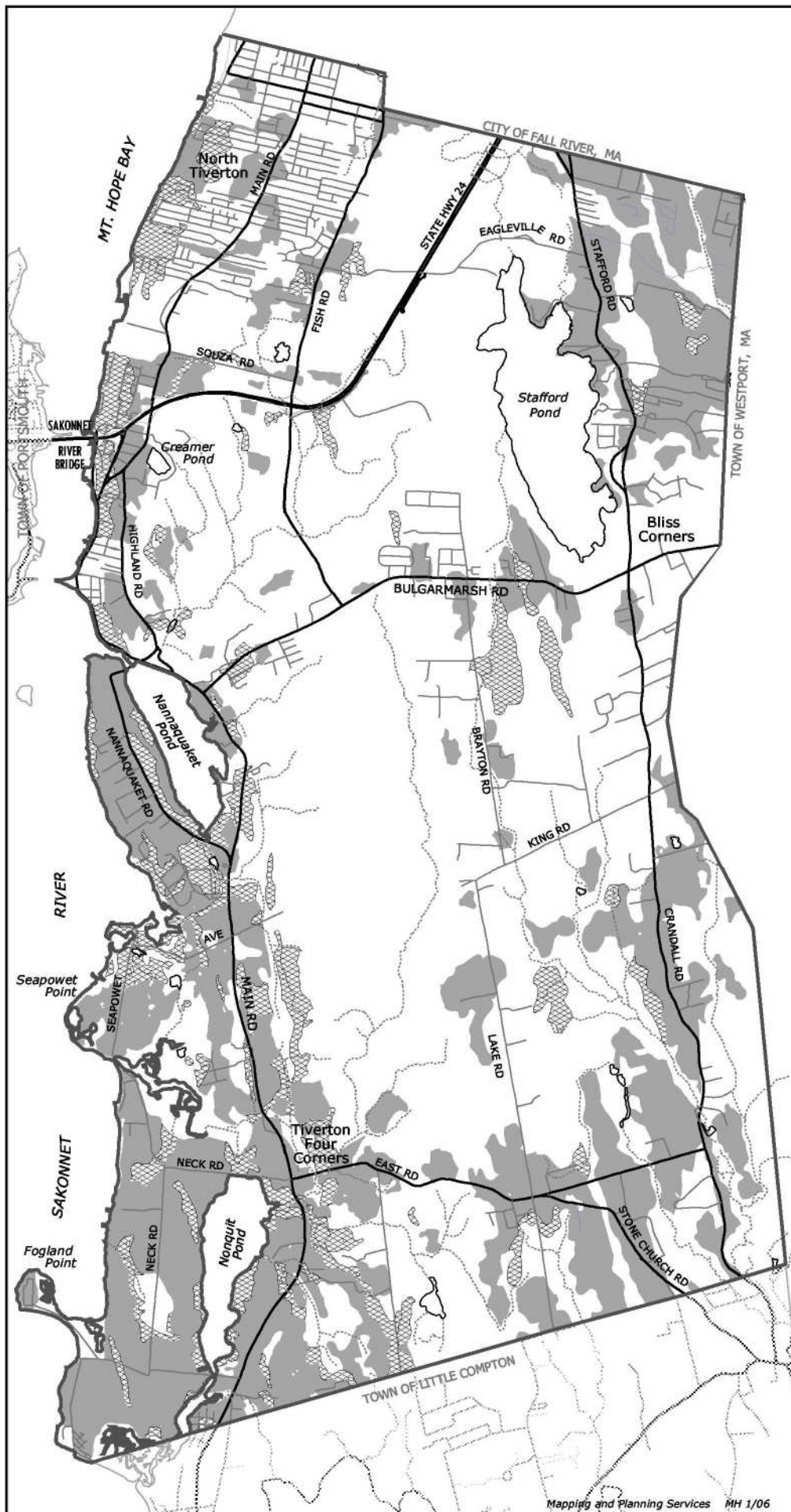
Rural character is somewhat difficult to define; yet it is unequivocally clear that people want to keep it. Rural character is a combination of many "small town" things about Tiverton that makes it charming--its open land, trees, scenic views, country lanes, *stone walls, historic buildings*, farms, wildlife and many other qualities that are associated with "country life" that disappear in *sprawling, unplanned suburban and urban development*. But they do not have to disappear if Tiverton is willing to plan and manage its future development. Many tools are presently available; from administrative actions like zoning and subdivision site plan processes to volunteer efforts such as land trusts. If these tools are carefully thought-out and implemented, it is possible to provide ample opportunity for housing development and economic growth while still retaining the town's rural character. In fact, this is not only possible, but studies have shown that such management practices actually enhance rather than inhibit local economies, because they ensure a community will continue to be a desirable place to live and work.

#### Scenic Resources

Tiverton is renowned for its scenic qualities. In 1990, the State of Rhode Island released a landscape inventory of scenic areas throughout the state. Four areas of the town were identified as distinctive or noteworthy. These are Fogland Marsh, Seapowet Marsh, Sin and Flesh Brook and Weetamoo Woods. *These areas correspond to the areas identified by the RI Natural Heritage Program as ecologically significant habitat areas, as shown in Figure 4-4.* Many roadways in the Town also exhibit scenic qualities worthy of protection. *The "Inventory of Rhode Island Roadways with Scenic Character" completed in 1996 for the RI Scenic Roadways Board identified Main Road south of Route 24 (Route 77), Seapowet Avenue, Neck Road, Fogland Road and Pond Bridge Road as all possessing scenic character worthy of designation as state scenic roadways.*

#### Prime Agricultural Land

Farmlands are an important resource in the town. According to RIGIS there are approximately 4,866 acres *consisting of soils that are suitable for use as* prime agricultural land in Tiverton. Those areas are illustrated in Figure 4-5. Agricultural land is generally well-drained, deep loam soils that are also ideal for building sites. Therefore, there is inevitable pressure to develop on soils that form the best cropland in town. The economic contribution of agricultural lands to the town is discussed in Chapter 10.



PRIME FARMLAND SOILS  
 IMPORTANT FARMLAND SOILS

Source: RIGIS Soils.

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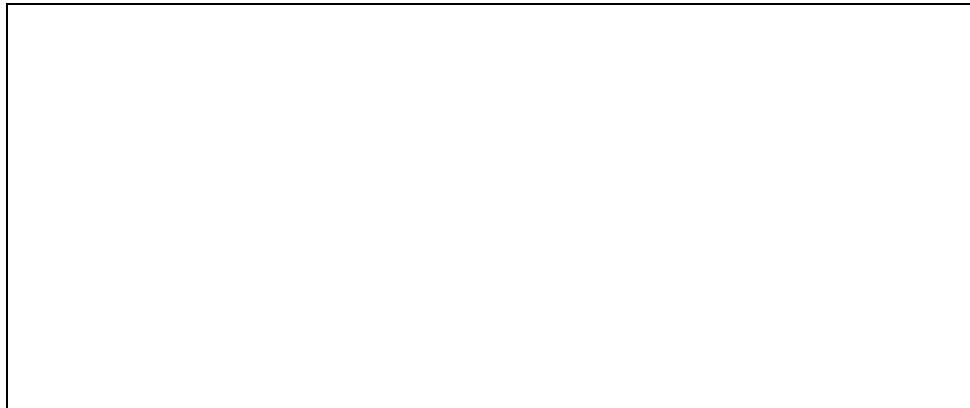
**Figure 4-5**  
**AGRICULTURAL SOILS**

The State of Rhode Island, through its Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, provides for the purchase of development rights as a means for preserving farmlands. *The program is administered by the RIDEM Division of Planning and Development through its Agricultural Land Preservation Program, which provides funding to assist in the purchase of the rights to develop the land residentially, an amount calculated as the difference between the fair market value of land and its value if restricted to agricultural use. The seller continues to hold title to the land, but a covenant is assigned to the property, which restricts the seller and their heirs from any further subdivision or any development other than for agricultural purposes. Additionally, the state's "Farm, Forest and Open Space Program" allows farmers and other landowners to receive a lower tax assessment on such land, with the resulting tax savings serving as an incentive to keep the land in agricultural use or undeveloped.*

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides additional incentives for landowners who protect and enhance land and water resources. The Wetland Reserve Program, for example, purchases development rights on wetlands, while the Farmland Protection Program, the Conservation Reserve Program and the Forest Legacy Program provide other financial incentives for landowners. More should be done to acquaint landowners with such land preservation programs.*

### **Historic Resources**

An inventory of historic and architectural resources prepared by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC) in 1983 identified significant buildings, historic districts and areas, and historic sites in Tiverton. This inventory serves as a basis for prioritizing historic preservation efforts. *Figure 4-6 indicates the locations of the resources identified in this survey (as updated) that are on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These resources are listed in Table 4-1. As of 2006, there are three historic districts formally listed on the National Register, the Tiverton Four Corners Historic District, the Cook-Bateman Farm Historic District, and most recently, the Osborne-Bennett Historic District on Main Road, each containing numerous historic structures. There are also two properties individually listed, Fort Barton and the Joseph Hicks House.*



*The Thomas Osborne House is part of Tiverton's history along Main Road.*

# DRAFT

## NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS:

- HISTORIC DISTRICTS
- A Osborne-Bennett
- B Tiverton Four Corners
- C Cook-Bateman Farm
- \* HISTORIC SITES
- D Jos Hicks House
- E Fort Barton

## POTENTIAL NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS:

- 1 Puncateest Neck Historic District
- 2 Peleg Stafford House
- 3 Sakonnet River Railroad Bridge
- 4 Capt. Isaac Church House / St. Christopher's Rectory
- 5 St. Peter's By the Sea
- 6 Col. David Durfee House / Manchester's House
- 7 William Durfee Farm
- 8 Old Durfee Farm
- 9 Federal Homelands
- 10 Nathaniel Briggs-Manchester House, The Stone House
- 11 Thomas Gray-Durfee House
- 12 Samuel Wilcox House / The Brick Front
- 13 Cory-Hicks-Borden-Gardner - Stevens House
- 14 Edward Cook Farm, G. Cook Farm, White Homestead
- 15 Justice Walter Cook House
- 16 Capt. Abel Manchester House
- 17 The Old Stone Church / First Baptist Church
- 18 Baker House

See Table 4-1 for listing.

Source: RIGIS / RI Historic Preservation Commission.



0 1 Mile

The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
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## Figure 4-6 HISTORIC RESOURCES

**TABLE 4-1**  
**HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES**  
*(Updated, 2006 -- Draft)*

<u>Site</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
<b>National Register Listings</b>		
A. Osborne-Bennett Historic District		<u>Main Road</u>
Bennett/Hambly House	c. 1822	1137 Main Rd
Osborn House	c. 1845	1148 Main Rd
Thomas Osborn House	c. 1790	1168 Main Rd
Judge Joseph Osborn House	c. 1845	1188 Main Rd
B. Tiverton Four Corners Historic District		Main Rd/East Rd
Soule-Seabury House		
Smith House		
Chase-Cory House		
C. Cook-Bateman Farm Historic District	c. 1730	Puncateest Neck Rd
D. Fort Barton	1776	Highland Rd
E. Joseph Hicks House		494 Main Rd
<b>Potential National Register Listings</b>		
1. <u>Puncateest Neck Historic District</u>		Fogland Rd/Puncateest Neck Rd/Neck Rd
2. Peleg Stafford House	18th Century	305 Main Rd
3. Sakonnet River Railroad Bridge	1898	Sakonnet River
4. Capt. Isaac Church House/ St. Christopher's Rectory		1660 Main Rd, Stone Bridge
5. St. Peter's By the Sea (former church)		Highland Rd
6. Col. David Durfee House/ Manchester's Home	1826	2698 Main Rd
7. William Durfee Farm	1768	2794 Main Rd
8. Old Durfee Farm		405 Nanaquaket Rd
9. Federal Homelands	c. 1760 et seq.	575 Nanaquaket Rd
10. Nathaniel Briggs-Manchester House	pre 1777	68 Indian Point Rd
The Stone House	1919	43 Penny Pond Rd
11. Thomas Gray-Durfee House	18th Century	432 Seapowet Rd
12. Samuel Wilcox House/The Brick Front	Late 18th Century	200 Neck Rd
13. Cory-Hicks-Borden-Gardner -Stevens House		Main Road
14. Edward Cook Farm		4340 Main Rd
G. Cook Farm		4375 Main Rd
White Homestead	Late 18th Century	4398 Main Rd
15. Justice Walter Cook House		East Road
16. Capt. Abel Manchester House	c. 1780	733 East Rd
17. The Old Stone Church/ First Baptist Church	1841	Old Stone Church Rd
18. Baker House	c. 1700 et seq.	1975 Crandall Rd

Source: RI Historical Preservation Commission.

A preliminary archaeological survey by RIHPC determined that Tiverton is also potentially one of the richest archaeological regions in New England. Its abundant shallow coastal waters and protected upland areas have been home to Native American cultures for thousands of years. The survey resulted in a proposed "Seapowet Archaeological National Register District."

#### **4.4 Natural and Cultural Resources Goal and Objectives**

##### **Goal**

**Preserve and protect the natural features and unique cultural qualities that contribute to the special character, identity, heritage and environmental quality of Tiverton.**

##### **Objectives**

- Protect the rural character of the community, including agricultural activities, woodlands, physical elements of the rural landscape and the rural coastline.
- Protect those natural features that sustain the basic functions of the town, including *high air quality*, surface and groundwater, wetlands and coastal features.
- Preserve biological diversity *and integrity* through protection and management of state and federally-listed rare species habitat areas and ecologically significant natural communities, *and through public education*.
- Protect the environment from potential sources of contamination.
- Preserve and enhance the visual quality of the community and its natural beauty.
- Preserve the historic and architectural features and the special areas of the community that contribute to its unique character.



*The Old Stone Church*

## 4.5 Natural and Cultural Resource Policies

### Rural Character

Despite areas of urban and suburban development, Tiverton has a strong identity as a rural community. The small town atmosphere and rural setting are among the most valued characteristics of the community. Yet the balance between the preservation of these qualities and the pressure for growth and change are particularly precarious. An active program that identifies those areas that should be preserved, and incorporates available conservation techniques, *continues to be needed despite the progress made by the Tiverton Open Space Commission and the Tiverton Land Trust in protecting individual parcels of land.*

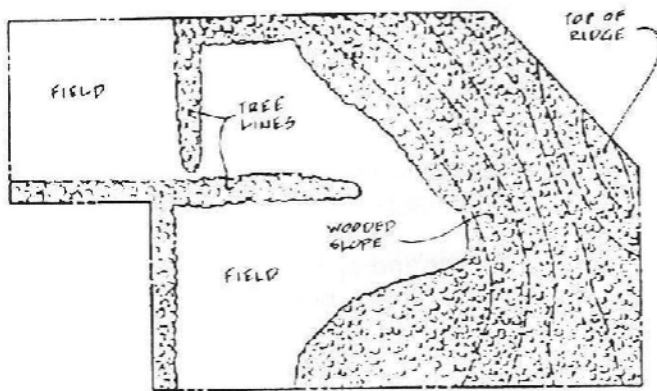
**Policy 1:** *Continue an active program of land acquisition to protect open space and rural character using the selection criteria described in the Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Chapter.*

Protection of the town's rural character goes beyond aesthetic qualities. It is inextricably linked to other objectives such as protecting water quality, preventing environmental degradation and preserving agriculture. The rural character of Tiverton is defined by the following elements: agricultural activities; wetlands and other natural constraints; woodlots; large open fields; stonewalls, barns, silos and other structures; clustered buildings separated by large areas of open space; and similar features. Each of these elements requires a degree of recognition and protection as key values of Tiverton.

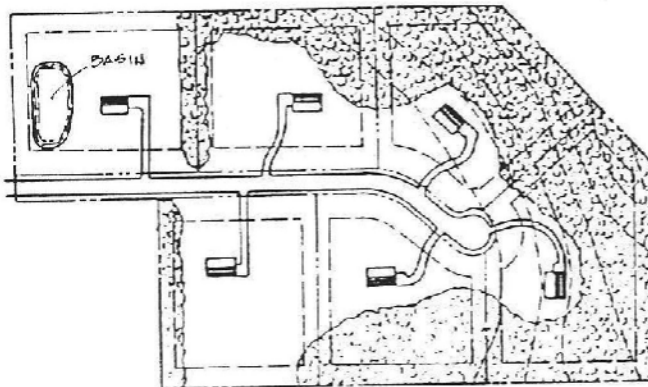
**Policy 2:** *Identify and develop an awareness and appreciation of elements of the rural character, such as farms, barns, open fields, stonewalls, mature trees, tree rows, and treed neighborhoods.*

Conventional development regulations, originating in urban settings, are poorly equipped to protect these values. Large lot zoning, as in the R-60 and R-80 districts, while effective in producing large lots, does *not necessarily* protect rural character as defined above. A combination of techniques to regulate uses, densities and site design are essential (See Figure 4-7)

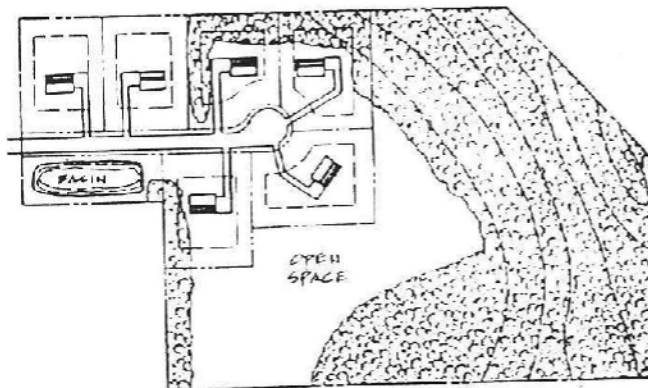
*Rural residential development, a concept evolved from cluster development, provides for the evaluation and protection of the character defining features of a site as part of the development process. As an alternative to conventional subdivisions, rural residential developments incorporate conservation design techniques that protect important features through use of flexible zoning, different engineering and design standards, and in some cases, reduced site density. Amendments to the zoning ordinance in 2001 followed by those to the subdivision regulations in 2003 authorize alternative development plans in the form of rural residential developments in place of conventional subdivisions. Rural residential developments are mandated within the Watershed Protection Overlay Districts.*



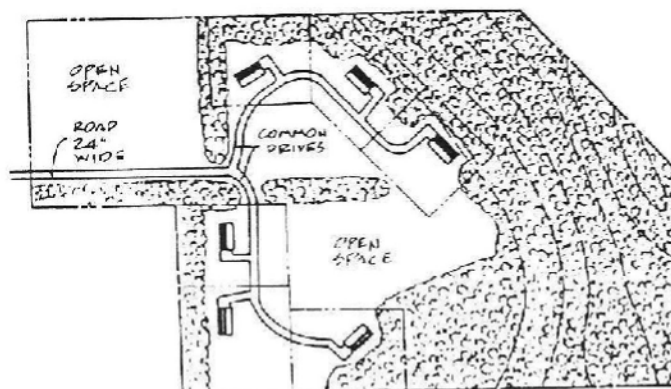
- ① Existing Conditions  
20 Acres  
Farm Fields  
Wooded Slopes



- ② Conventional Development  
6 Large Lots  
Conventional Roadway  
Cul-de-sac



- ③ Cluster Development  
6 Lots  
Shorter Conventional  
Roadway  
Cul-de-sac



- ④ Creative Development  
6 Lots  
Common Driveways  
Short Road

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**Figure 4-7  
SITE DESIGN  
ALTERNATIVES**

**Policy 3a:** *As development occurs, the Planning Board should work with developers to promote rural residential developments as the preferred type of development pattern, particularly in the town's rural and less developed areas.*

**Policy 3b:** *To assist in the creation of high quality and well designed rural and conservation developments, the Planning Board shall use the services of professional design consultants to work with developers, as needed.*

*Protection of the town's tree resources has aesthetic and scenic value. By enhancing property values and lessening the impacts of residential development, it has a sustainable economic benefit as well. In 2001, the Tree Commission, the Conservation Commission and the Open Space Commission endorsed a Notable Tree Program to identify and record rare and unusual trees and trees of significant age, size, and visual appeal. In 2002, the Tree Commission established a Tiverton Neighborhood Tree Program to provide a permanent source of resources for street tree planting throughout the town.*

**Policy 4a:** *Promote local stewardship of the town's tree resources utilizing the Plan for Urban and Community Forestry (State Guide Plan Element 156, May 1999) as a reference.*

**Policy 4b:** *Continue to require protection of existing significant trees and to specify replacement trees for new developments and subdivisions.*

### **Visual Quality**

*A great number of things make Tiverton a wonderful place to see, including beautiful landscapes, old buildings and some attractive newer developments. There should be aesthetic standards for commercial areas to encourage the creation of safe, attractive and efficient centers, rather than unsightly strips. The town has general standards for signage and the siting of development within commercial zones. These standards should be reviewed on a district-by-district basis. Additional design guidelines for commercial, mixed use, and major residential developments governing signs, lighting, utility wires, landscaping, buffering, parking and the architectural style and design of development were included in amendments to the subdivision regulations in 2003. In 2005 the town initiated a design standards project to set more detailed building and site design criteria for new development in all commercial districts in town.*

**Policy 5:** *Establish a design review commission to assist the Planning Board in approving architectural designs for new commercial and mixed use development compatible with the town's historic and rural character.*

*Because of the special historic qualities of the area, the local commercial district around Tiverton Four Corners merits special consideration. The 2001 zoning revisions established a "Village Commercial" District for the Four Corners area. Design*

guidelines for this area should be prepared with emphasis on pedestrian amenities, lighting, utility wires, signage and historic compatibility.

**Policy 6:** *Adopt specific design standards for new commercial and mixed use developments in town, including specific design guidelines and standards for the Tiverton Four Corners area.*

*Public and private development must be sensitive to, and compatible with, natural and scenic qualities. "Viewsheds" or scenic vistas within the line of sight of motorists and pedestrians from certain sites and passageways should be preserved for the enjoyment of the public. In 2003, the Planning Board adopted amendments to the subdivision regulations that established viewshed protection measures. The Planning Board should continue to be sensitive to viewshed protection by maintaining buffers, protecting stone walls and mature trees, and by considering the impact of the placement of structures as they relate to open fields and hills. The town could incorporate more specific standards within a scenic roadways overlay district that regulates development within the viewsheds of the town's scenic roadways in south Tiverton.*

**Policy 7a:** *Continue to identify natural and scenic vistas and apply standards for their protection as part of the development process.*

**Policy 7b:** *Consider the establishment of a scenic roadways overlay district that includes standards for the protection of scenic defining features within important viewsheds.*



*New development in Four Corners should complement its historic character*

## **Surface Water and Groundwater Supply**

Underground storage tanks (UST's) containing petroleum products and other hazardous materials pose a threat to surface and groundwater supplies. Most of these tanks are

constructed of steel, with no corrosion protection. *Currently, the town requires homeowners to register all UST's on their property. Federal law (Resource Conservation and Development Act) regulates commercial UST's.*

The RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has proposed regulations governing the installation of UST's, for adoption by local municipalities. Tiverton should determine the location of abandoned UST's that may be sources of pollution, and establish a program for their clean-up, removal and sealing. In addition, the town should identify potential sources of pollution from gas stations and private pumps by maintaining current maps monitoring their locations. The RIDEM lists *approximately 90 registered and regulated UST's at 30 locations in Tiverton. Figure 4-8 identifies locations of UST's that have experienced leaks and other hazardous sites as identified by RIDEM. Tough federal regulations (40 CFR 280-282) impose new construction, monitoring and reporting requirements on regulated USTs, and mandate specific remedial action if spills/releases occur. The town currently issues an annual operating license to commercial UST operators, but should require documentation that operators are meeting all federal and state requirements as a condition for receiving an annual license.*

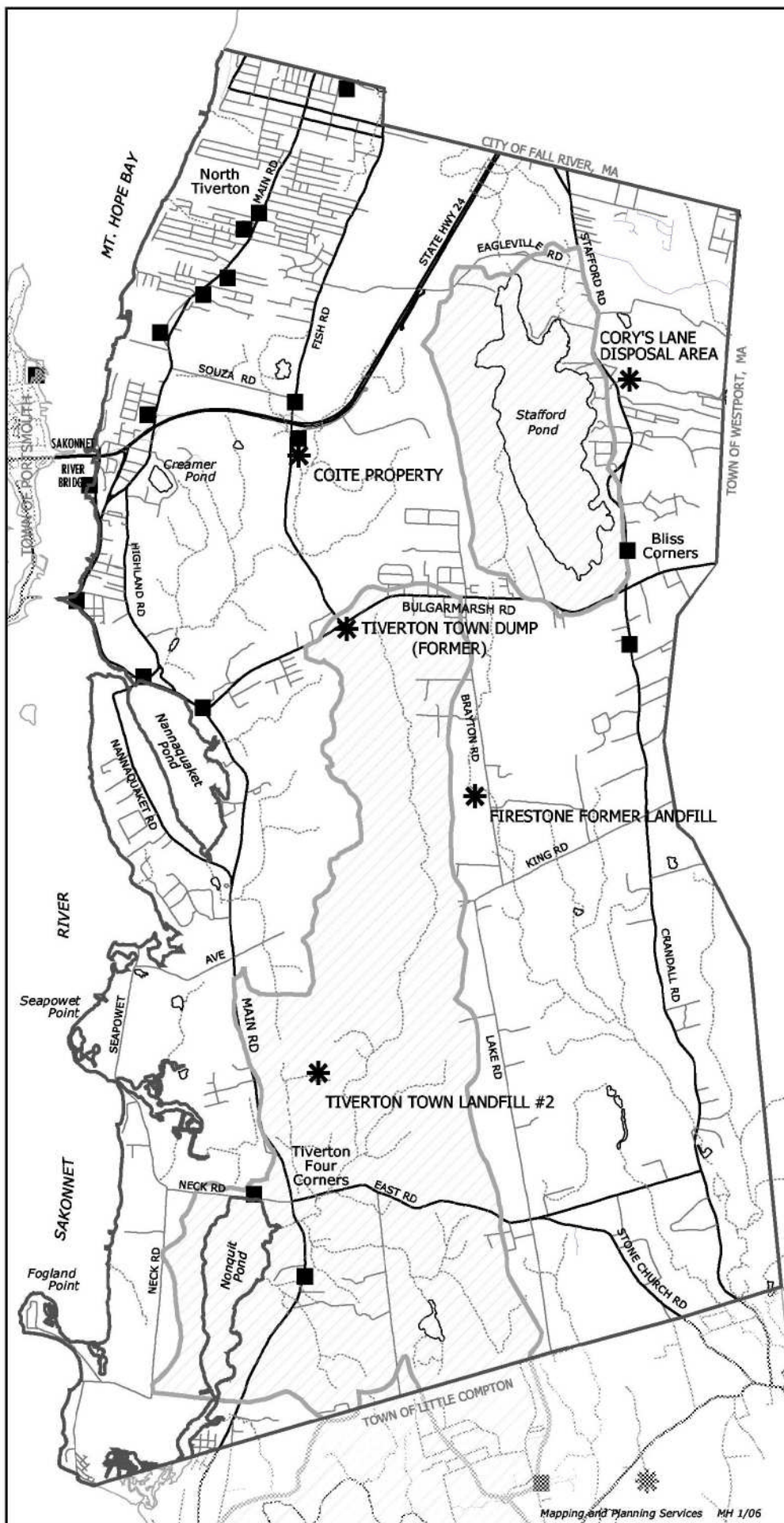
The shipment of hazardous materials through Tiverton and the common disposal of household hazardous wastes are other potential sources of pollution that can injure soil and water resources. *Also problematical is the large number of decaying motor vehicles on both residential and business property. As these vehicles rust and decay, harmful substances are released into surface and groundwater.*

**Policy 8a:**     **Review procedures to identify and monitor underground storage tanks. Require UST operators to provide permit documentation as a condition of receiving an annual operating license.**

**Policy 8b:**     *Enforce existing regulations to prevent potential pollution from decaying vehicles in junkyards and other private properties in town.*

### **Stafford Pond**

*The protection of the Stafford Pond watershed is particularly urgent since the pond is the town's principal supply of public drinking water; distributed by the town's two water districts (see Chapter 7). The establishment of a citizen watchdog group for that watershed area could be particularly effective in monitoring activities which would impact water quality and educating citizens about the need for watershed protection. This group could also guide the development of a management plan for the Stafford Pond watershed. In addition, while the pond benefits from the restrictions contained in the Watershed Protection Overlay District and the use of best management practices at the dairy farm and the Stafford Road stormwater drain, the continued use of gasoline motors on the pond is detrimental. The town recognizes the legitimate recreational rights of waterfront homeowners, but the entry of gasoline powered craft from the boat ramp is inappropriate to a drinking water supply.*



- STORAGE TANKS USED FOR PETROLEUM & CERTAIN HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED LEAKS AS DETERMINED BY RIDEM.
- \* HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SITES DESIGNATED BY THE U.S. EPA and RIDEM
- ▭ PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED

Source: RIGIS 1997 CERCLIS  
RIGIS 1999 LUSTs.

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**Figure 4-8  
HAZARDOUS SITES**

**Policy 9a:**     **Establish a Stafford Pond Watershed Association that includes representatives of the water districts, town boards and commissions, residents and business people which have an interest in the watershed.**

**Policy 9b:**     *Request that the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management close the Stafford Pond boat ramp to gasoline powered craft.*



*Stafford Pond, the town's principal public drinking water source*

### ***Nonquit Pond***

The City of Newport, which owns the water rights to Nonquit Pond, *has worked in conjunction with the RIDEM and the town to protect the watershed through the acquisition of land. These efforts were reinforced when the Watershed Protection Overlay District was extended to the Nonquit Pond watershed as part of town-wide zoning amendments adopted in 2001.*

However, the Tiverton landfill is located within the Nonquit Pond watershed, and Borden Brook, which feeds Nonquit Pond, also drains from the landfill. There is clearly potential for contamination by leachate from the landfill. *In 2001, the Town Council established a Landfill Committee to monitor possible leachate contamination of Cedar Swamp, Nonquit Pond and private drinking water wells in the area. New monitoring wells have been built and both groundwater and surface water testing has been intensified. Control measures to curb both leachate and surface water runoff through contouring and a new retention pond are being implemented. Engineering analysis has determined that the landfill will reach capacity at about the year 2015, at which point it must be closed and capped.*

**Policy 10:**     ***Continue to monitor potential leachate contamination from the Tiverton landfill.***

## **Wetlands**

The vast inland and coastal wetlands of the town serve essential functions for water quality such as providing groundwater recharging areas and wildlife habitat. They also assist in flood control as storage areas, and act as giant sponges that slow the velocity and amount of stormwater.

The RI Department of Environmental Management has responsibility for the identification of wetlands, the determination of their significance and the regulation of activities that would lead to their decline. An ongoing program to monitor potential infractions of wetlands should be conducted at the local level. *Zoning regulations adopted in 2001 require a minimum building area that excludes wetlands and other means to protect these vital natural resources.*

**Policy 11: Preserve wetlands to protect groundwater recharge areas, control flooding and preserve wildlife habitats by ensuring compliance with the Rhode Island Freshwater Wetlands Act.**

## **Coastal Features**

There are three components to the Tiverton coastline - the harbor area around the Tiverton Basin, the scenic coastline to the north and south, and the coastal environmental features at Fogland and Seapowet Marshes. Each of these areas requires a different treatment.

*The harbor area is Tiverton's working waterfront and is important to the town's economy. It is regulated in accordance with an approved and periodically revised Harbor Management Plan. This plan covers the operation of the Harbormaster's Department, which controls mooring assignment and fee collection, as well as oversight of the Harbor Patrol, which is responsible for boating safety and rescue missions. The Harbor Management Plan, which balances marine uses with protection of the ecosystem, must be approved by the RI Coastal Resources Management Commission (CRMC).*

**Policy 12: Update the Harbor Management Plan as necessary to ensure protection of environmentally sensitive areas, as required by the CRMC.**

Tiverton's scenic coastline contains unique features and vantage points that add to the town's waterfront character. Views from the coastline and from the water to the coastline are important assets that merit preservation. Key vantage points should be identified. Siting of structures along the coastline should consider the impact on coastal views, and the siting of facilities within environmentally sensitive areas of the coast should consider their impact on the area's natural and scenic qualities.

**Policy 13: Define coastal scenic views and consider standards for their protection.**



*Tiverton is known for its coastal scenery*

### **Environmental Quality**

The State of Rhode Island has promulgated standards for the abatement and control of soil erosion and runoff of sediments from construction sites. These standards, found in the RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook, are an important resource for review procedures, and serve as a starting point for technical guidelines for applicable construction operations, and for sand and gravel site operations and restabilization. Tiverton currently has a stringent soil erosion and sediment control ordinance written in accordance with state guidelines. *The Phase II Storm Water Management Plan, adopted by Town Council in 2003, calls for amendments to the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance.*

**Policy 14:** *Enact and enforce the proposed amendments to the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance as recommended in the Phase II Storm Water Management Plan. Continue enforcement of soil erosion and sediment control ordinance, using the Rhode Island Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook.*

### **Historical and Archeological Resources**

With nearly 100 structures either on or potential candidates for the National Register of Historic Places, the wealth of historic buildings and structures in Tiverton is notable. These resources strongly influence the character of broad areas of the town, such as Stone Bridge, Bridgeport, Nanaquaket and Puncateest. Yet the town has suffered the demolition of many significant structures in recent years. Demolition, alteration and new construction all have the ability to radically alter the qualities of the community that

attract residents and visitors alike. The town's historical resources are not as well documented as they should be. The state survey is not current and many properties eligible for the State and National Register listing have not been listed. Better documentation is needed. This service could be a charge of a local Historical Preservation Advisory Board.

Rhode Island law (Chapter 24.1) provides for historical area protection. Although an historic zoning ordinance was rejected in the early 1990s, the town should reflect upon the reasons for defeat and continue to search for ways to encourage the preservation of its historic treasures in the absence of implementing historic district zoning. These steps may include ongoing education regarding the value of historical structures.

A local Historical Preservation Advisory Board could be a voluntary program to advise and assist property owners on historic preservation matters, and to create community awareness of the benefits of preservation. Such a group could foster pride in the town's historic roots without making demands on property owners. It would also make the town eligible for financial and technical assistance for qualifying historic preservation projects. This board should also coordinate efforts regarding the proposed Seapowet Archaeological National Register District with the RI Historical Preservation Commission.

**Policy 15: Create an Historic Preservation Advisory Board that provides advice and assistance on preservation; identifies and provides plaques for historic homes and sites; and provides other education and outreach programs.**

*In the original plat of the great lots that comprised the chartered town plan for the Pocasset Purchase in 1680, an Eight Rod Highway was laid out as the eastern boundary. Down through history, however, the town grew in different directions, with other roadways becoming more frequented thoroughfares. That portion of the original Eight Rod Highway between Bulgarmarsh Road and East Road ceased to be used and became overgrown by forest. However, there are considerable archeological remains, including stone walls, cellar holes and dug wells. These remains are clearly Colonial in origin, and could represent an extremely valuable link to the original settlement history of the town, and as such should be studied and preserved.*

**Policy 16: *Solicit assistance from the RI Historical Preservation Commission to acquire funds to study the origins of the Eight Rod Way archeological remains and develop a protection strategy that correlates with the open space preservation effort described in the Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Chapter.***

The town's important archeological resources are also a concern. They are threatened by any nature of development that disturbs the subsurface. In addition to better documentation of these resources, the town's development procedures should be geared to protection. The proposed Historical Preservation Advisory Board should be given the

resources and documentation of potential sites within or approximate to development activity. The board should be called upon to advise the Planning Board as to an appropriate course of action to preserve these materials.

When a proposed development is located within an area marked as archeologically sensitive on the town's archeological sensitivity map, an archeological assessment should be required; if in the opinion of the Planning Board there is likelihood that cultural resources or undetected human remains will be adversely impacted by construction. To assist in reaching its decision, the Board may request an advisory report from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC) concerning the documented or potential archeological importance of the area and whether archeological studies are warranted. When required, the archeological assessment and any additional studies should be conducted by a professional archeologist according to the RIHPC *Standards for Archeological Survey*. When required by the board, the applicant may have to perform such measures necessary to identify, evaluate, protect or properly remove significant archeological sites within the project area.

*The 2003 revisions of the town's subdivision regulations provide the Planning Board with authorization to identify and protect archeological resources.*

**Policy 17: Site plan and subdivision review procedures should *continue to* include an evaluation of potential archeological resources and possible provisions for their protection.**



*Eight Rod Way, a link to Tiverton's early history*

## **5.0 LAND USE PLAN** (*italics represent changes to current plan*)

### **5.1 Current Land Use**

Tiverton occupies 35.5 square miles on the eastern shore of the Sakonnet River. The pattern of land use and development within this area includes four distinct sectors - north Tiverton, Stone Bridge, east Tiverton, Stone Bridge and south Tiverton.

*North Tiverton, the area extending north and west of Route 24, is an area of older residential and commercial development. It includes neighborhood retail and service businesses along Main Road and residential development, primarily single family units, on the side streets. Along Main Road, small scale strip commercial uses prevail. The west side of Fish Road, the other north-south corridor in this area of town, is primarily residential while the east side consists of industrial land, much of it vacant. The vicinity of the Route 24 - Fish Road intersection is an evolving nexus of major non-residential uses. Along the Fall River border is the Bourne Mill, an historic and architecturally distinctive 19th Century mill building, currently being used as a warehouse but with potential for mixed use redevelopment, including affordable housing.*

Other significant land uses in north Tiverton include Pocasset Elementary School, the eight-acre Pocasset Park, and an oil tank farm at the foot of State Avenue. *The former oil tank farm on about 100 acres on the west side of Main Road opposite Souza Road has undergone remediation and is being redeveloped into a mixed use but primarily age-restricted community of condominiums called the Villages on Mount Hope Bay.*

South of Route 24 on Main Road is Stone Bridge, one of the historic areas of Tiverton. This area has a maritime aura, with active waterfront uses backed by older residences and several institutional uses. The residential upland is dominated by 19th century homes that give the area its historic character. Waterfront uses include the public Grinnell's Beach, several commercial establishments, the Tiverton Yacht Club, a boat launch, *and several marine related businesses along the Sakonnet River.* Homes along Riverside Drive also capture the maritime flavor; several are built on pilings along the shoreline. Other land uses include Fort Barton Elementary School, the Town Hall, Essex Library and Fort Barton with its Revolutionary War redoubt.

*East Tiverton, the area east of Route 24 and north of Bulgarmarsh Road, is predominantly residential. A commercial area at the intersection of Bulgarmarsh Road and Stafford Road is known locally as Bliss Four Corners, although commercial uses extend north along Stafford Road. The Tiverton High School, Middle School and Ranger Elementary School are within this area of town, as is Stafford Pond, a principal source of the town's water supply. Stafford Pond is generally surrounded by residential use with some protected areas along its southwestern shores. West of Stafford Pond, in the area of Route 24 and Fish Road, are municipal uses including the public works garage and police facility, as well as the 228 acre industrial park, whose sole occupant in 2005 is a natural gas-generated electric power plant. Off Stafford Road in the northeast corner of town is an age-restricted manufactured home community called Countryview Estates.*

South Tiverton, *the area south of Bulgarmarsh Road, remains mostly rural and agricultural in character, though suburban style residential subdivisions are increasingly fragmenting the area.* Large estates lie along the shoreline, with small residential developments on Crandall, King, Lake and East Roads, and *some* large parcels in agricultural use. The historic Tiverton Four Corners has developed into a charming commercial area, and a small commercial cluster *exists* at the intersection of East and Lake Roads.

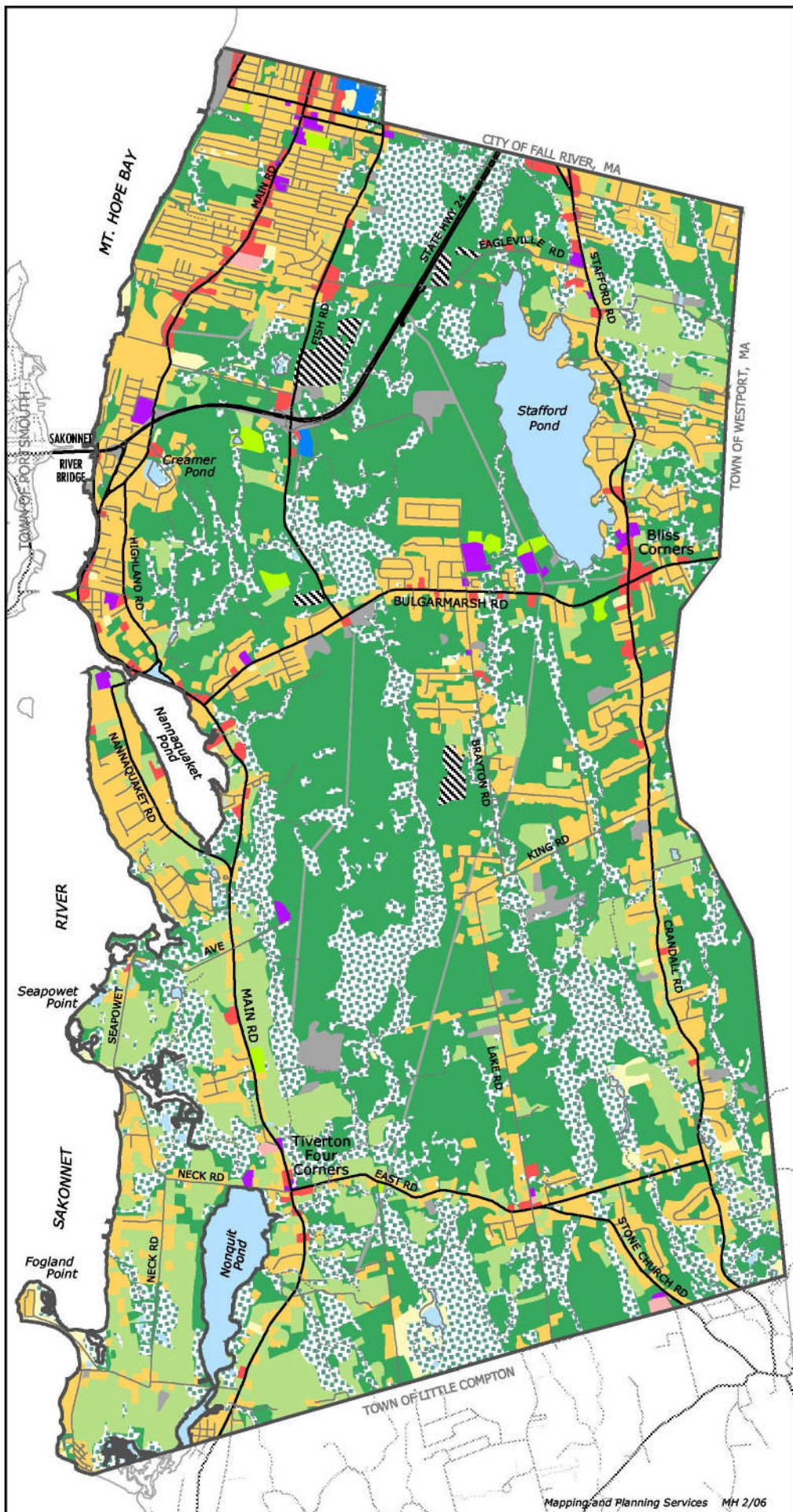
Much land has been set aside *for open space* and to protect *environmentally* sensitive areas, notably Reucker's Wildlife Preserve, Seapowet Marsh, Fogland Marsh, *Pardon Gray Preserve, Eight Rod Management Area* and Weetamoo Woods. Additionally, Nonquit Pond and its watershed cover a significant area. This is part of the City of Newport's public water system, and *a zoning overlay to prevent intensive development and protect the watershed is now in place as it is for Stafford Pond.*

*Specific land uses in south Tiverton include Union Public Library just north of Tiverton Four Corners and the Nonquit School on Neck Road west of Four Corners. The area around Four Corners is a National Register Historic District and much of the commercial portion of it is zoned Village Commercial, a district created to protect its historic character. The Seapowet and Fogland areas, including Fogland Beach, are significant environmental, scenic and recreational resources. A large town recreation area, the Town Farm, is located on Main Road. The town landfill is located to the east of this recreation area.*

*Figure 5-1 shows generalized land use based on land cover data obtained from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) for the year 2003, with 2005 field updates. The breakdown of land use by acreage is as follows:*

**TABLE 5-1**  
**LAND USE IN ACRES, 2005**

<b><u>Land Use</u></b>	<b><u>Acres</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Residential	3,918	20.2 %
Commercial	319	1.6 %
Industrial	32	0.2 %
Agricultural	2,296	11.9 %
Utility/Transportation/ Waste Disposal	437	2.3 %
Mining or Extractive	119	0.6 %
Institutional	103	0.5 %
Cemeteries	24	0.1 %
Recreation (developed)	76	0.4 %
Forest and Brushland	7,034	36.3 %
Vacant Land/Transitional	186	1.0 %
Wetlands	4,001	20.7 %
Water/Saltwater	810	4.2 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,355</b>	<b>100 %</b>



## Generalized Land Use / Land Cover Classifications :

- Residential
- Commercial (sale of products & services)
- Industrial
- Utility, Waste Disposal & Transportation
- Developed Recreation
- Cemeteries
- Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.)
- Agricultural Land (inc. inactive)
- Forest and Brushland
- Vacant / Transitional
- Mining or Extractive
- Wetlands
- Water

Source: RIGIS 1995 Land Use/Land Cover updated using RIDOT 2003 and USDA-NAIP 2003 orthophotography. Minimum mapping unit 1/4 acre. Field corrections, 2005.

# DRAFT



0 1 Mile

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TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
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**Figure 5-1  
GENERALIZED  
LAND USE 2005**

## 5.2 Land Use Regulation

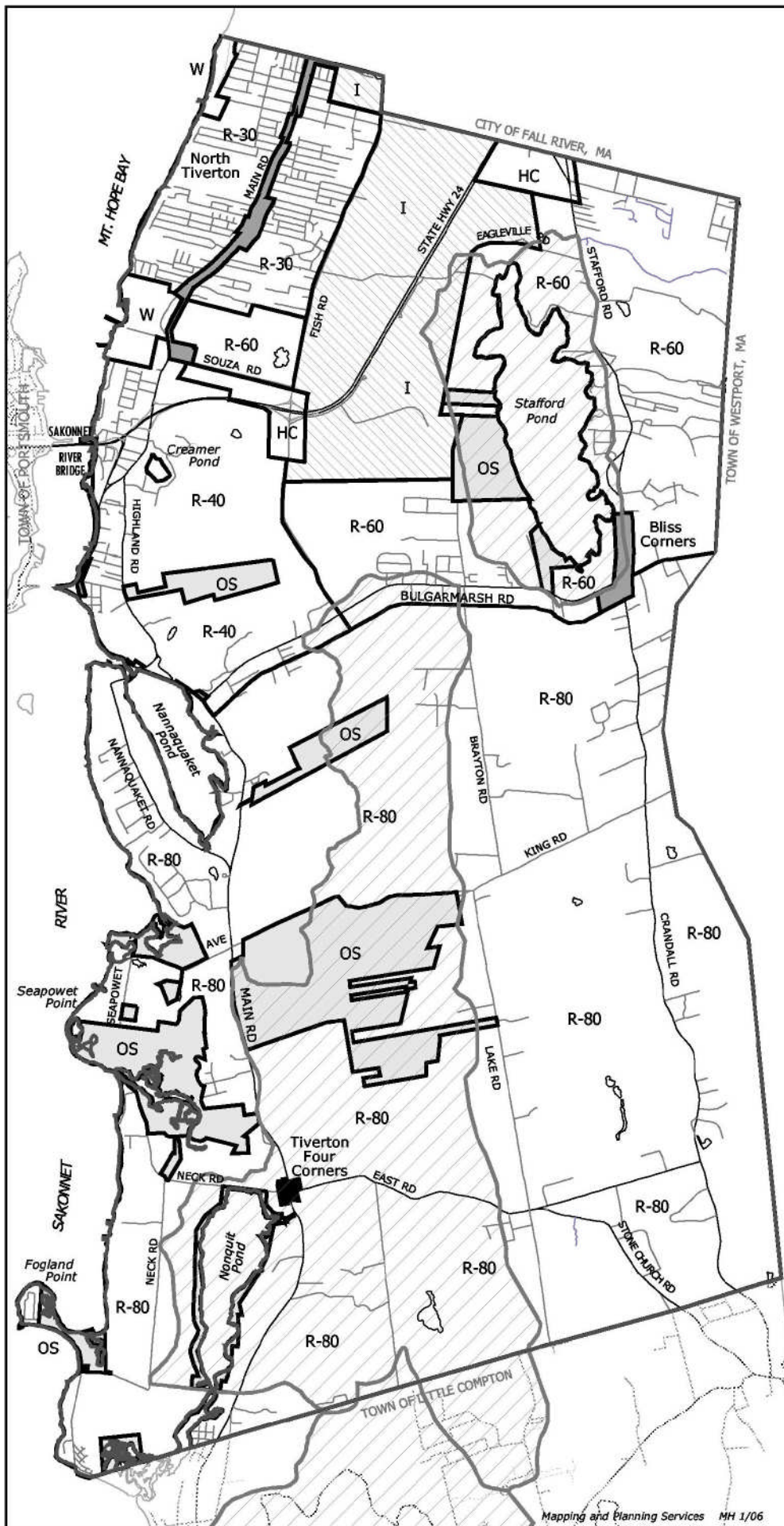
The establishment of land use districts through zoning is the most widely applied method of regulating land use. The town's original zoning ordinance was adopted in 1964, with a revision in 1970. *A complete rewrite was done in 1994 to comply with the Rhode Island Zoning Enabling Act. To ensure consistency with the goals and objectives of the Tiverton Comprehensive Plan that was certified by the state in 1997, major revisions to the zoning ordinance were approved in 2001. These included provisions for Rural Residential Developments, the addition of a watershed protection overlay district for Nonquit Pond, the creation of a Village Commercial District for Tiverton Four Corners, a new Open Space/Conservation district, and a new Waterfront District.*

Land use is now controlled with *four* residential districts, *four* commercial districts, *one* industrial district *and an open space district*. In addition, there are watershed protection overlay districts around Stafford and Nonquit Ponds. Figure 5-2, the *Tiverton Zoning Map*, illustrates the distribution of these use districts throughout the town. Table 5-2 below reflects the acreage within each existing zoning district, while Table 5-3 summarizes the existing zoning districts, their intent and basic area standards.

**TABLE 5-2**  
**LAND AREA BY ZONING DISTRICT, 2004**

<u>District</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Residential</b>		
Residential R-30	997	5 %
Residential R-40	1,432	7 %
Residential R-60	2,656	14 %
Residential R-80	10,158	52 %
<b>Commercial</b>		
Village Commercial VC	11	--
General Commercial GC	149	1 %
Highway Commercial GC	211	1 %
Waterfront W	166	1 %
<b>Industrial</b>		
Industrial I	1,407	7 %
<b>Environmental</b>		
Open Space OS	1,521	8 %
Water Bodies	<u>716</u>	<u>4 %</u>
<b>Total</b> (rounded up)	19,420	100 %

Source: Tiverton Zoning Map, adopted June 4, 2001 and amended June 28, 2004



#### ZONING DISTRICTS

	GENERAL COMMERCIAL
	HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
	VILLAGE COMMERCIAL
	INDUSTRIAL
	WATERFRONT
	RESIDENTIAL R-30
	RESIDENTIAL R-40
	RESIDENTIAL R-60
	RESIDENTIAL R-80
	OPEN SPACE

WATERSHED PROTECTION  
OVERLAY DISTRICT

Source: Town of Tiverton Official Zoning  
Map adopted June 4, 2001  
(inc. amendment June 28, 2004).

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or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN

**Figure 5-2**  
**ZONING MAP 2004**



**TABLE 5-3  
ZONING DISTRICTS**

<i><b>District</b></i>	<i><b>Description (minimum lot areas and allowable uses)</b></i>
<i><u>Residential</u></i>	
<i>R-30</i>	<i>30,000 sq. ft. lots; single and two-family residential, multi-family, nursing and retirement homes with special use permit</i>
<i>R-40</i>	<i>40,000 sq. ft. lots; single family residential, nursing and retirement homes with special use permit</i>
<i>R-60</i>	<i>60,000 sq. ft. lots; single and two-family residential, multi-family, nursing and retirement homes with special use permit</i>
<i>R-80</i>	<i>80,000 sq. ft. lots; single family residential, nursing and retirement homes with special use permit</i>
<i><u>Commercial and Industrial</u></i>	
<i>VC</i>	<i>12,000 sq. ft lots; small scale retail and commercial uses, design standards for preserving historic character (e.g. Tiverton Four Corners).</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>12,000 sq. ft. lots; general commercial, community retail and service uses</i>
<i>HC</i>	<i>20,000 sq. ft lots; businesses requiring larger areas and highway access</i>
<i>W</i>	<i>10,000 sq. ft. lots; non-residential and mixed-use along Sakonnet River principally for water dependent commercial uses</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>40,000 sq. ft. lots; industrial uses, including technology and office parks</i>

The watershed protection overlay *districts* around Stafford *and* Nonquit Ponds protect the quality of public drinking water by regulating development around the ponds. The overlay areas limit density of residential development, provide for a buffer from *the shorelines*, and restrict the use of chemicals, fuels, pesticides and other sources of contamination. *The overlay district regulations* also require an environmental review statement for proposed developments, *which allows the Planning Board to require additional constraints or restrictions on the development.*

In 1987, an ordinance was adopted to provide for cluster developments. It allowed modification of certain zoning requirements in order to *preserve* open space or create recreation areas within a subdivision. *As part of the 2001 zoning ordinance revisions, the cluster ordinance was replaced by regulations that provide for subdivision designs called Rural Residential Developments. This type of development incorporates conservation by design techniques to permit smaller house lots and open space preservation. It also allows privately maintained roads for special subdivisions where oversized lots are created (rural compounds). Road frontage requirements can also be relaxed under certain circumstances with common driveways used in order to decrease the number of curb cuts. Rural Residential Developments are meant to preserve rural character, protect the environment, and lower the long term public tax burden by decreasing the cost of infrastructure maintenance.*



*New residential development should encourage open space preservation*

*Provisions for elderly housing have also been added to the zoning ordinance. The Manufactured Home Elderly Community (MHEC) regulations provide for self contained communities of moderately priced housing for residents age 55 and older. Other new uses provide for retirement and continuing care facilities, and the Age Restricted Mixed Use Community (ARMUC) regulations were established to allow the creation of the Villages on Mount Hope Bay.*

*Finally, a Large Scale Office Park Development (LSOPD) ordinance was written to allow the development of a technology/office park within the Industrial District for a site that has a minimum area of 125 acres and is serviced by public water and sewer.*

The Tiverton Subdivision Regulations provide the procedures and standards for the division of land, as well as the specifications for street and infrastructure improvements. *The subdivision regulations were completely rewritten in 1995 to conform to the Rhode Island Land Development and Subdivision Review Enabling Act. Major amendments in 2003 adopted by the Planning Board provided complementary language for Rural Residential Developments, added site and building design standards for review of commercial and industrial developments, and enhanced aesthetics standards relating to residential subdivisions, such as tree preservation and viewshed protection.*

### **5.3 Development Trends**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, in the decade between 1990 and 2000 the population of Tiverton grew by 6.6%, *as opposed to the state of Rhode Island as a whole, which grew by 4.5%.* Most of the development has been in the form of small-scale subdivisions, or single unit developments. Commercial development has included small establishments along Main Road in north Tiverton, at Bliss Four Corners, Stafford Road, Fish Road, and a small development on East Road in south Tiverton.

*However, Tiverton is increasingly being influenced by a regional real estate and commercial development market centered in the greater Boston area. Its location in southeastern New England, convenient highway access, and land available for development have resulted in significant development pressures. This will only be increased with the potential construction of commuter rail service from Boston to Fall River. By 2005, Tiverton experienced proposals for more subdivisions than previous years, as well as retail development proposals of a regional nature.*

*Local factors are also adding to development pressure. They include: (1) the development of the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, which will lead to a demand for more retail uses; (2) the construction of a main sewer line along the shore of Mount Hope Bay from Fall River south to the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, then east to the industrial/technology park; and (3) the planned expansion of both sewers and water service. The development of the industrial/technology park, which has significant employment potential, could also result in a demand for both residential and commercial development.*

### **5.4 Build Out Analysis and Future Land Use**

*A build-out analysis completed in early 2006 estimated future residential development potential in Tiverton. The estimated potential number of dwelling units that could be built as-of-right in different areas of the town was calculated based on existing zoning and using digital data from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS).*

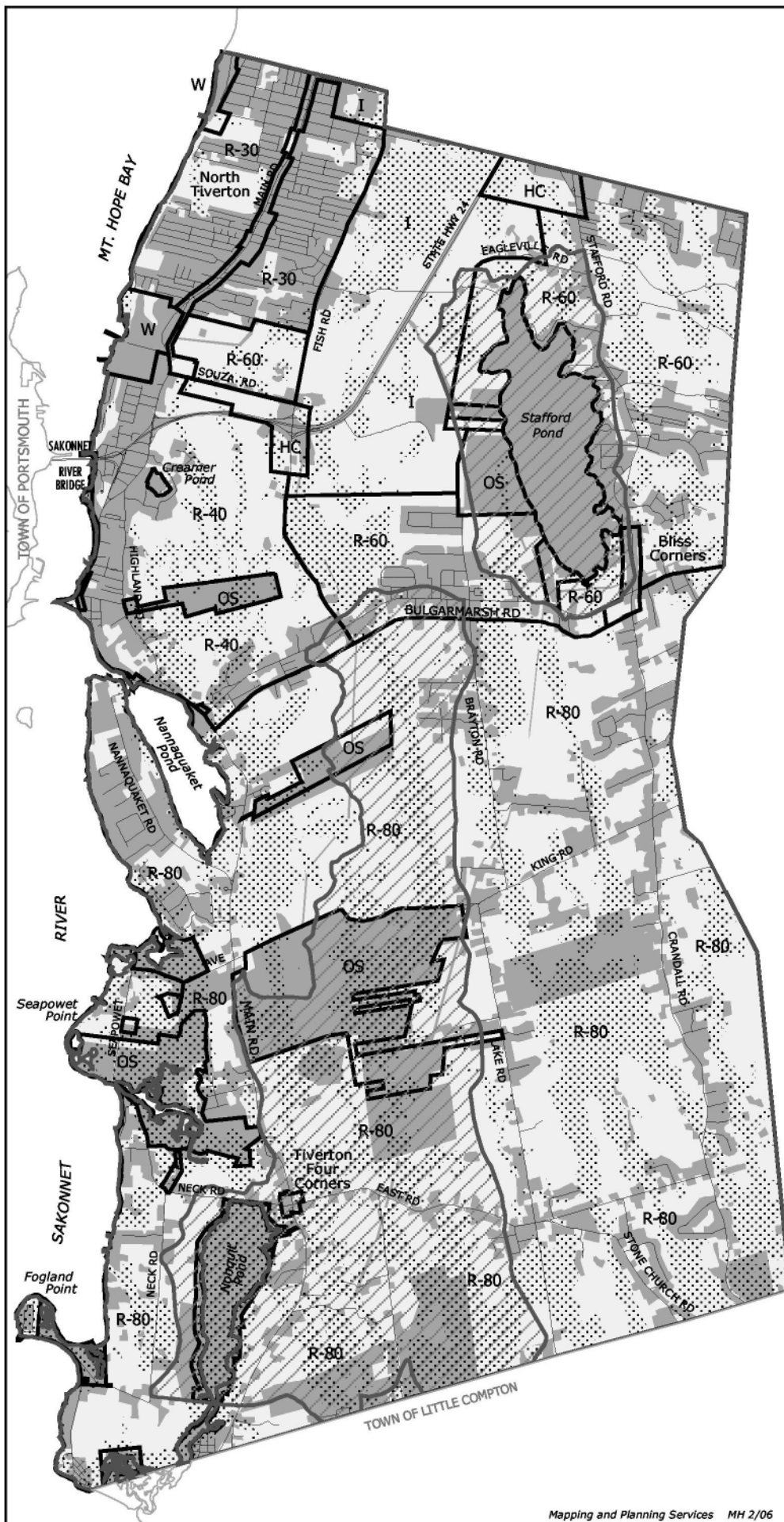
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- DEVELOPABLE
- ABSOLUTELY CONSTRAINED
- PARTIALLY CONSTRAINED

R-60 ZONING DISTRICTS

WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICT (ZONE I & II)

Source: Tiverton Residential Buildout Analysis 2005, Mapping and Planning Services.



0 1 Mile

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TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN



**Figure 5-3  
BUILDOUT ANALYSIS**

*The acreage of developable land within each zoning district was calculated by eliminating land already developed, land protected from development and land with physical constraints (wetlands and steep slopes). The methodology used is described in more detail in an appendix to this chapter. Limitations of the available digital data and the need to make certain assumptions necessitate that the overall and site-specific results should not be used for anything other than general planning purposes. Land with constraints to development with the zoning district boundaries overlaid is depicted in Figure 5-3.*

*The build-out analysis projected that an additional 3,681 dwelling units could be developed as-of-right in Tiverton based on the land available for development and the zoning in place as of 2005. The acreage within each zoning district, including that within the Watershed Protection Overlay District (which requires larger minimum lot sizes) is summarized in Table 5-4 below. Under these build-out conditions, the total number of units would be in excess of 10,000 units (the 2000 Census counted 6,474 housing units). Based on an average household size of 2.5 persons, the town's population would increase by 9,203 persons resulting in a total population of 24,463 (the 2000 Census counted 15,260 persons).*

**TABLE 5-4**  
**POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS**  
**BY ZONING DISTRICT, 2005**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>Total Buildable Acres</b>	<b>Buildable Acres within WPOD</b>	<b>Total Buildable Units</b>
<b>VC</b>	11	3	0	0
<b>GC</b>	149	42	0	18
<b>HC</b>	211	122	0	0
<b>I</b>	1,403	857	0	0
<b>W</b>	166	133	0	0 *
<b>R-30</b>	997	192	0	317
<b>R-40</b>	1,433	572	12	612
<b>R-60</b>	2,657	982	274	763
<b>R-80</b>	10,158	3,972	1,279	1,971
<b>OS</b>	1,521	0	0	0
<b>Water Bodies</b>	717	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19,422</b>	<b>6,875</b> acres	<b>1,565</b> acres	<b>3,681</b> units

*Source: Mapping and Planning Services, 2006*

*Figure 5-4 contains the proposed Land Use Plan for Tiverton. It is based on a review of existing land use and zoning, and reflects the many goals and policies expressed in this Comprehensive Community Plan relative to desired future development, protection of open space and environmental features, and future planning efforts (see Planning Concept Chapter 3).*

# DRAFT

## FUTURE LAND USES:

- Watershed Protection
- Protected Open Space
- High Density Residential
- Med Density Residential
- Rural Residential / Agricultural
- Commercial Uses
- Waterfront-Related Uses
- Industrial Uses
- Industrial / Technology Park

## Other Features:

- Town Center Area
- Study Areas
  - #1 Main Road
    - commercial and mixed-use area
  - #2 Stone Bridge
    - waterfront, recreational and commercial area
- Gateways
- Rail right-of-way



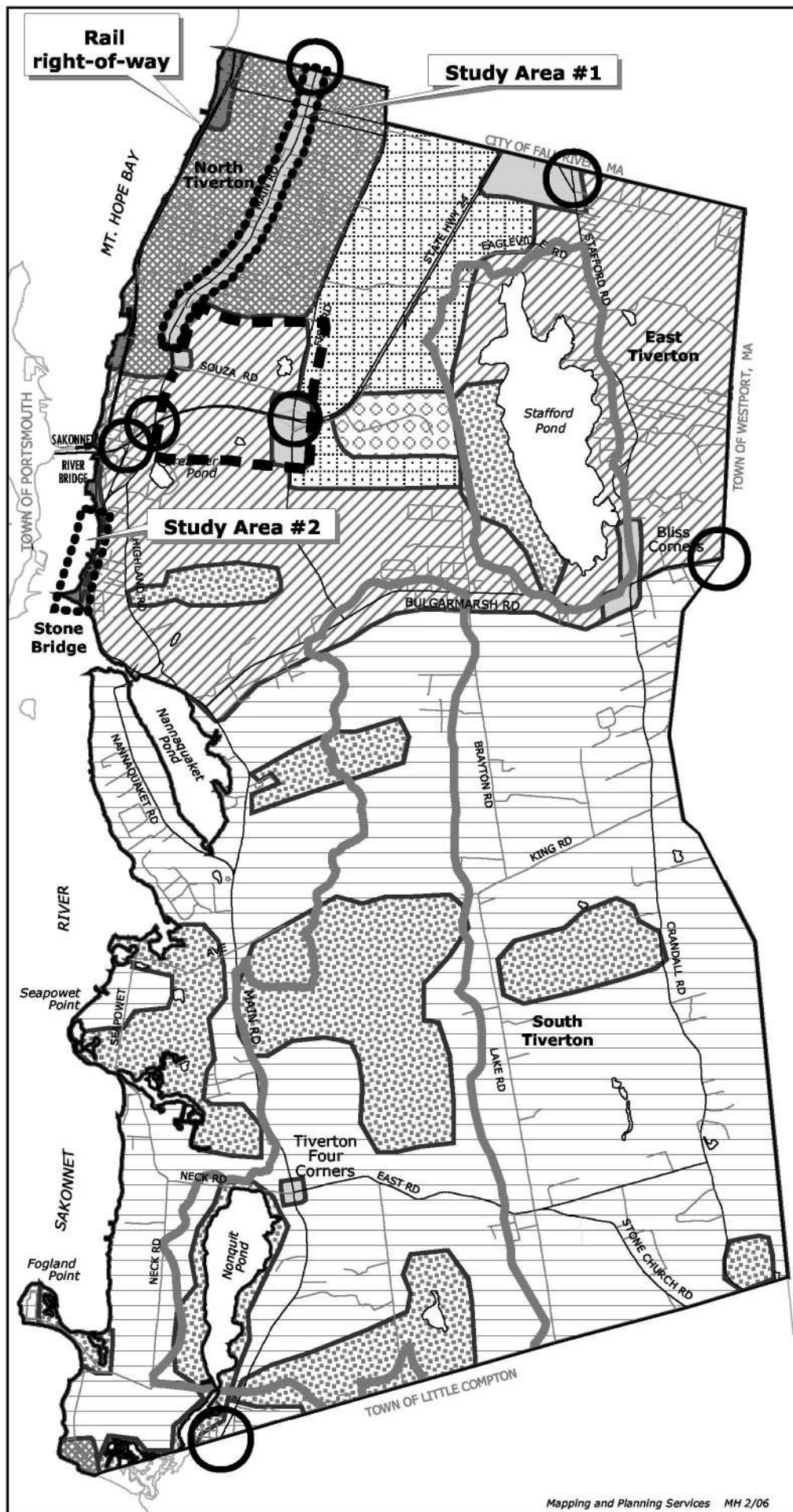
0 1 Mile

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TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
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## Figure 5-4 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



## 5.5 Land Use Goal and Objectives

### Goal

**Promote land use patterns that are consistent with natural resource constraints, are environmentally and economically sound, minimize incompatibility among uses, and preserve Tiverton's rural and small town character.**

### Objectives

- Utilize the land use plan to guide future growth and development, and serve as the basis for future regulatory actions.
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of current zoning district designations, particularly the appropriateness of the areas currently zoned for industrial and highway commercial uses.*
- Promote *marine related* land uses along the Tiverton waterfront.
- *Support the diversification of the town tax base and increase in net tax revenue through non-residential development, including the development of the town industrial/technology park, in a manner that is compatible with and protects the predominantly rural, historic, maritime and small town character of Tiverton.*
- Inventory and evaluate town-owned property to determine the use that promotes the long-term interests of the town.
- *Ensure that town staffing is adequate to meet the complex planning and regulatory challenges required as development pressures increase.*
- *Ensure that utilities are extended and provided only in a manner that is compatible with desired rate and density of future development and done with consideration of aesthetic impacts.*

## 5.6 Land Use Policies

### *Land Use and Zoning*

The core of this Comprehensive *Community Plan* is to shape future land use so that it preserves the *rural and small town character* of the community. Land use, more than anything else, determines the kind of town Tiverton will be in the future. The starting point for land use planning is the zoning ordinance and the zoning map (Figure 5-2), which establishes permitted uses and dimensional standards for each of the zones. *The zoning map resulted from a multi-year process that began with the completion and state approval of the original comprehensive plan, and culminated with the adoption of major ordinance revisions in 2001. Those revisions were based on the general land use plan*

*and the respective land use policies in the comprehensive plan. The fundamentals of the existing ordinance are, therefore, adequate as a regulatory document for future land use in Tiverton. This plan proposes further refinements to the zoning ordinance, includes uncompleted policies from the previous comprehensive plan, and addresses emerging land use issues that need to be considered for future regulatory changes.*

*In addition to zoning, the development of land is managed by the application of the Tiverton Land Development and Subdivision Regulations, through the subdivision and site plan review process. Design review is also authorized by the Development Plan Review regulations contained in the zoning ordinance. These land use regulations control not only use and density, but site and building design; therefore it is important that the town periodically review the effectiveness and suitability of both its zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. There are also environmental limitations that supplement town regulations. Areas of town not suitable for development because of natural constraints and environmental sensitivity are governed by federal and state regulations, which provide for input, or even peremptory action on the part of the town. These regulatory controls, given careful monitoring, and town zoning restrictions preventing development on “unsuitable land,” will protect these areas without additional regulations.*

**Policy 1:** *Ensure that the land use goal and specific visions for desirable future development, as stated in this Comprehensive Community Plan, are achievable with the zoning and subdivision regulations, and that these regulations remain relevant through periodic monitoring and review.*

*In 2005, approximately 1,400 acres (7%) of the land area of the town is zoned for industrial use. This area, located in north Tiverton, is largely undeveloped. Several small general business or light industrial uses have located within the district, and a portion of the area is used for road material storage; however, the district is largely undeveloped. Much of this industrial land is wetland. As of 2005, approximately 228 acres remain available for development as the town’s industrial/technology park, and there have been no development proposals for the remaining land zoned for industry despite the proximity of public water and sewer. The future use of this property should be carefully considered to avoid environmental degradation and to maximize public benefit.*

**Policy 2:** *Evaluate the development potential of the vacant industrial property in town, and consider rezoning to allow uses that are compatible with the environment, the surrounding area and the small town character of Tiverton.*

*Within its zoning ordinance, Tiverton has three commercial and waterfront districts that vary in terms of the intensity of uses allowed. The least restrictive of these is the Highway Commercial District, which is set aside for commercial enterprises that require large land areas for parking and development, and which rely to a certain degree on highway access. A number of regional retail developments proposed in the early 2000’s have served to crystallize the town’s position on these types of development, as reflected*

*in adverse public reaction and proactive steps taken by various town councils (see Economic Development Chapter). As a result, the town must consider the need for this type of commercial district, taking into account the fiscal impacts, traffic and other quality of life impacts of the type of commercial development it encourages.*

**Policy 3:** *Evaluate the definition, allowable uses and dimensional requirements of the Highway Commercial District, and modify if necessary to be consistent with the land use goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Community Plan.*

The Tiverton Four Corners area contributes significantly to the identity of the town and is now being regulated by a Village Commercial District. These regulations should be evaluated to ensure that they provide sufficiently clear standards for building design and reasonable procedures for design review, and that the area as zoned is appropriate. In addition, it may be appropriate that other neighborhood areas of Tiverton are served by village scale retail, and that this be supported by a change to Village Commercial zoning.

**Policy 4a:** *Evaluate the Village Commercial District to ensure that the unique identity of Tiverton Four Corners is preserved.*

**Policy 4b:** *Consider the application of the Village Commercial District to other areas of the town as may be appropriate.*

#### ***Marine Related Uses***

The Tiverton harbor is an important, but limited resource that has economic, residential, cultural and recreational value for the community. The zoning revisions of 2001 included the establishment of a Waterfront District to govern large portions of the Sakonnet River and Mount Hope Bay waterfront areas. This district generally restricts the commercial areas of the waterfront to marine related uses such as boat launches, marinas, fisheries and other maritime activities. In 2003, the Stone Bridge Improvement Task Force (appointed by the Town Council) began to study possible improvements to the Tiverton Basin and Sakonnet River waterfront. The project proposed ways to utilize a newly acquired waterfront parcel as well as returning the area to a village atmosphere by quieting traffic, enhancing scenic quality and making the area more pedestrian friendly. It also included evaluating the feasibility of removing the gas station alongside the town owned Grinnell's Beach. These efforts should continue so that Tiverton's historical connections to the waterfront remain strong and accessible to the public.

**Policy 5a:** *Follow-up on waterfront-related studies and design concepts with a comprehensive waterfront plan that evaluates long term options for development, improved aesthetics and public access.*

**Policy 5b:** *Complete improvements to the Stone Bridge area, including the expansion of Grinnell's Beach and Independence Park by exploring alternatives for acquiring and removing the gasoline station.*

### ***Diversification of Town Tax Base***

*There continues to be a need for development that generates net tax revenue but is of a scale that is consistent with the town's size and character. Considerable efforts by the town to achieve an appropriate balance between commercial development and quality of life has been made; creating new land use regulations for the town's industrial/technology park, and exploring options for a mixed-use town center are examples. There are a number of options to diversify the tax base in a manner compatible with the town's character, such as developing the industrial park, supporting and expanding the traditional industries of agriculture and fishing, as well as the arts, and allowing new development that includes mixed uses (see Economic Development Chapter).*

**Policy 6:**        ***Support industrial and commercial uses that result in net tax revenue and are compatible with the small town and rural character of the town.***

### **Town-Owned Parcels**

Town-owned land represents an important resource which can help the Tiverton achieve its housing, open space and economic development objectives. There presently exists no comprehensive inventory or evaluation of this important resource for the purposes of *long range* planning. Such an inventory needs to be produced and regularly evaluated and updated.

**Policy 7:**        **Inventory and evaluate town-owned property to determine its best use based on the comprehensive plan. Review the inventory on a periodic basis as part of the capital planning process.**

### **Administration, Enforcement and Coordination of Land Use Regulations**

Land use regulations are principally administered by *the Administrative Officer to the Planning Board*, and the Building Official and Director of Public Works. While the town has retained professional engineering and planning services on a consulting basis, the increasingly complex demands of reviewing major developments, many of which have the potential to profoundly shape the future character of the town, require that the town increase the level of its professional support. The town must be prepared to both plan proactively for the future and deal with the administrative, technical and planning requirements of regulating ongoing development.

**Policy 8:**        ***Establish a planning department with a full-time planner and staff that support the work of the Planning Board and works in conjunction with all town departments.***

### ***Utility Infrastructure***

*A major factor in future land use is the availability of public sewer and water. While the need for sewers in north Tiverton is well documented (see Community Services and Facilities Chapter), a more extensive public sewer system would open up areas to development that are presently limited by poor soils that prevent the use of individual septic disposal systems. This is especially true in south Tiverton where the lower density of development gives the area its famed rural character. In addition, installing public water service into areas that do not have public sewers can alter ground water levels and negatively impact the operation of private septic systems. Land use decisions must be consistent with future plans for town services discussed in the Services and Facilities Chapter. It also is evident that the town administration must be able to exercise control over future construction of utility infrastructure if it is to effectively manage future land use.*

**Policy 9:**     *Allow the expansion of sewer and water utilities into areas of town that are not presently serviced only in a manner that is consistent with the desired land uses and densities as identified in this Comprehensive Community Plan.*

The siting of such structures as satellite dish antennas, communication towers, *wind towers*, water towers, pumping stations and fixtures, water storage tanks and *utility wires* should be undertaken with care and concern for their aesthetic impact on the community as a whole. Landscaped screening should be utilized and siting should avoid heights of land where their appearance would be most intrusive on the visual quality of the town. *Underground utility wires servicing new major subdivisions and commercial and industrial developments should be encouraged.*

**Policy 10:**    *Develop regulations with regard to the siting of utility and accessory structures, so that the design and operation of such utilities are consistent with the town's small town and rural character.*



***LAND USE CHAPTER APPENDIX  
BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY***

The Municipal Build-out Analysis Toolkit (BAT), a computerized tool consisting of added functionality and extensions to ESRI ArcView and MS Excel was used to conduct the residential buildout. Initially developed by Applied Geographics, Inc. and modified in 2005 by Mapping and Planning Services, Inc., this tool has been most recently applied to conduct both residential and commercial/industrial build-out analyses for twenty-five water suppliers as part of the Phase II Supplemental Water Supply Study (2005) for the RI Water Resources Board.

The BAT consists of two primary components:

- The *Scenario Generator*, which uses GIS data in ESRI ArcView to build a town-wide Developable / Constrained (DevCon) composite, and
- The *Buildout Calculator*, comprising a programmed set of tables in Microsoft Excel, which applies the rules of municipal bylaws, constraint characteristics and yield factors to the DevCon to produce scenario-specific buildout statistics for the Town and all the zoning districts within it.

The *Scenario Generator* performs a series of overlay analyses enabling Absolute and Partial Constraints to be factored in. It operates with any themes loaded into any views in an ArcView project, enabling the integration of new and/or updated GIS data (for example, zoning, land use, open space).

For the Town of Tiverton, the Absolute Constraints included those land uses already considered developed (residential, commercial, industrial, utility/waste disposal and transportation, developed recreation, institutional, and water land uses), as shown on Figure 5-1. The 1995 RIGIS Land Use/Land Cover data set was updated using 2003 RIDOT and 2003 USDA-NAIP digital orthophotography, and then edited with 2005 field corrections. The Generalized Land Use/Land Cover 2005 acreages are listed in Table 5-1. Existing mining and extractive land use areas (including quarries) were considered to be developable.

Other areas within the town considered as absolutely constrained included those permanently protected open space areas (see Figure 9-1), and water areas and surface water reservoirs as shown on Figures 5-1 and 4-2, respectively. Absolutely constrained lands were considered already built-out and would not be subject to further development or redevelopment for this analysis. This assumption has the likely effect of underestimating the residential buildout. An estimated 7,929 acres, or approximately 41% of the town is considered to be absolutely constrained.

Partially Constrained lands were assumed to be developable, but depending on the number of those constraints, a factor was applied to consider both the resolution (minimum mapping unit) and spatial accuracy's of the available RIGIS data sets.

Wetlands were considered as a partial constraint (Figure 4-3); however buffer areas around the RIGIS wetlands were not factored in.

Soil types with slopes greater than or equal to 25% were considered, as well as soils classified as not suitable for community development (Groups 4 & 5). Areas likely subject to the 100-year flood zone were also considered as partial constraints. In areas with only one partial constraint it was assumed that 25% of that “raw acreage” will be developed, while areas with multiple partial constraints would only be 3% developable. An estimated 4,606 acres, or approximately 24% of the town is considered to have either single or multiple partial constraints.

Those areas considered with Absolute and Partial Constraints are shown on Figure 5-4. Areas that have no development constraints are an estimated 6,923 acres, or 36% of the town.

The results of the GIS-based overlay analyses, including the area of each zoning district (see Figure 5-2), were imported into the Buildout Generator Model. Within each zoning district, 15% of the gross area of the zoning district was removed to allow for new roads and/or oddly shaped lots to calculate Net Area (acres). The Buildable Area was calculated by applying a Build Factor to the Net Area based on the level of constraint, where no constraints = 1, partial constraints = 0.75 (meaning that 25% is buildable) and fully constrained = 0. Areas within both the primary and secondary protection areas of the Watershed Protection Overlay District were also considered.

The number of buildable lots within each zoning district area were calculated (rounded down to a whole number) and were based on the minimum lot size allowed by current zoning. Future residential land uses within zoning districts that allowed both single family and two-family residential development were projected at 70% and 30% of that zone, respectively. This was projected within the R-30 and R-60 districts. Existing lot configurations (shape, dimensions, frontage, etc.) were not considered, since the Town does not have GIS parcel mapping developed that would allow that information to be readily factored in.

Infill development was not considered, nor was the redevelopment or conversion of existing structures. In addition multi-family or accessory family dwelling units were not considered since they require a special-use permit.

*Mapping and Planning Services  
February 2006*

## 6.0 HOUSING

*As adopted by the Planning Board and Town Council on December 28, 2004 with amendments primarily to the Affordable Housing Plan (Section 6.7) as approved by the Department of Administration on September 30, 2005 (shown in italics).*

The housing section identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives in Tiverton, a community of primarily single family houses. Like most towns in Rhode Island, Tiverton is facing a challenge in providing affordable housing for all its residents, and is committed to meeting this challenge while maintaining the principal planning goal of preserving its small town ambiance and rural character. A component of this Housing Chapter is a plan to meet the goal of 10 % affordable housing units as mandated in the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, R.I.G.L. 45-53, as amended. These units are defined as those that are affordable to residents earning less than or equal to 80% of the area median income. This affordability is provided through a federal, state or municipality subsidy which guarantees it for a period of at least thirty years, *but preferably ninety-nine years.*

### 6.1 Housing Supply and Demand

Tiverton has developed from its origins in the early 1700's as a series of small hamlets with a farm and fishing based economy, to an attractive residential location close to the region's employment centers. Tiverton's predominantly single family dwelling housing stock gives the town its residential character, and is regarded by residents as a very important aspect of the town.

The most recent US Census indicates that there are 6,474 housing units in Tiverton. Table 6-1 below shows the increase in housing from 1970 to 2000. Between 1970 and 1980 there was an increase of over 20% in the total housing stock. Between 1980 and 1990, and 1990 and 2000, the rate of housing unit increases slowed, resulting in a change of about 13% for the first decade and 14% for the last decade.

**TABLE 6-1  
HOUSING UNIT CHANGE 1970 - 2000**

<b>Total Units</b> <b><u>1970</u></b>	<b>Total Units</b> <b><u>1980</u></b>	<b>%</b> <b>Change</b> <b><u>1970-1980</u></b>	<b>Total</b> <b>Units</b> <b><u>1990</u></b>	<b>%</b> <b>Change</b> <b><u>1980-</u></b> <b><u>1990</u></b>	<b>Total</b> <b>Units</b> <b><u>2000</u></b>	<b>%</b> <b>Change</b> <b><u>1990-2000</u></b>
4,169	5,010	+20%	5,675	+13%	6,474	+14%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 6-2 below shows the number of housing units by type. According to the Census, nearly 80% of the housing units in Tiverton are single family (both detached and attached). This is consistent with the percentage from the 1990 Census (80.8%). Multi-family units make up about 16% of the units, a third of which are in large complexes (ten or more units). The number of units in this category more than doubled since 1990, primarily due to the construction of the Sakonnet Bay Manor, a 170 unit continuing care retirement community (independent, assisted living and skilled nursing).

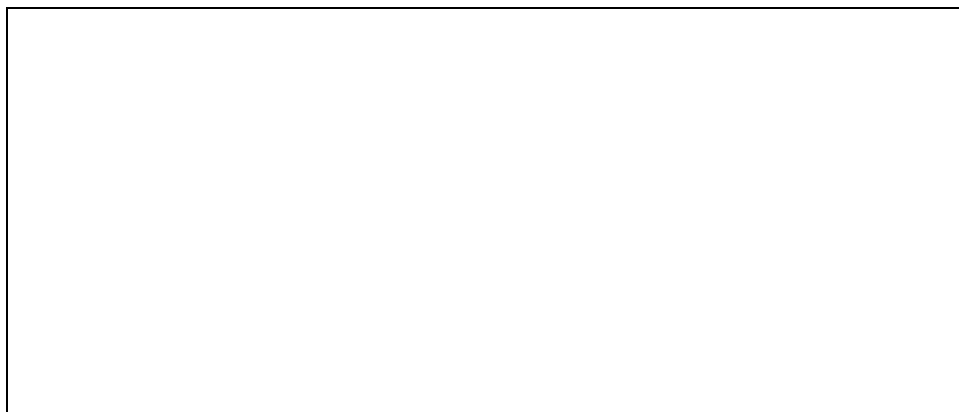
**TABLE 6-2**  
**HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE**

<u>Type of Structure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Single-family, detached	5,024	77.6%
Single-family, attached	129	2.0%
Two to four units	678	10.5%
Five to nine units	63	1.0%
Ten or more units	320	4.7%
Mobile homes*	<u>270</u>	<u>4.2%</u>
Total housing units	6,474	100.0%

\* Includes other units such as boat, RV or van

Source: US Census 2000

Tiverton also has 270 mobile homes or alternative housing units such as manufactured homes. This number will be increased with the full development of a manufactured home elderly community being developed in northeastern Tiverton; now partially constructed, Countryview Estates will eventually support 269 manufactured homes on assigned areas. The majority of the units counted in the Census are in mobile home parks. These include the Dadson Mobile Estates on Bulgarmarsh Road, which has 102 units, the Four Seasons Mobile Home Association on Brayton Road, which has 38 units, and the Heritage Home Park Cooperative on Fairfield Avenue off Main Road, which has 37 units.



*Most homes in Tiverton are single family detached structures*

Table 6-3 shows the age of Tiverton's housing. While over a quarter of the housing stock was built during and immediately after World War II, more than half has been built since 1960. However, approximately 20% of the housing in Tiverton was constructed before 1939, prior to subdivision developments, and it is this portion of the housing stock that most contributes to Tiverton's visual character. The age of these houses means that the costs involved in their preservation and upkeep are high. Many residents take pride in their historic homes, although they may not always have the means for the upkeep.

**TABLE 6-3  
AGE OF HOUSING UNITS**

<u>Year of Construction</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1939 or earlier	1,335	20.6%
1940 to 1959	1,672	25.8%
1960 to 1969	910	14.1%
1970 to 1979	941	14.5%
1980 to 1989	738	11.4%
1990 to March 2000	<u>878</u>	<u>13.6%</u>
Total	6,474	100.0%

Source: US Census 2000

The US Census information indicates that for the period between 1990 and 2000, there were 878 housing units (of all types) constructed. Because there was a total increase of only 799 units, this means, even accounting for discrepancies in recording year of construction, some older units were lost. The Census data measuring the increase in total number of housing units and number of new units is complimented somewhat by data from the RI Economic Development Corporation, who has assembled counts of authorized new housing units within Tiverton, and its adjoining communities.



*Multi-family units like the Villages on Mount Hope Bay are now being built*

As Tables 6-4 and 6-5 indicate, the overwhelming housing type added to the market has been the single family home, although both Tiverton and Portsmouth have contributed to the region's share of multi-family units. Growth in new single family homes has been fairly steady and consistent with little in the way of large fluctuations from year to year (Tiverton and Little Compton more so than Portsmouth). Over the 12 year period, Tiverton has an average of 51 building permits per year for single family houses. This steady growth in the number of new single family houses is expected to continue as evidenced by the subdivision activity in town.

**TABLE 6-4**  
**AUTHORIZED NEW HOUSING UNITS - SINGLE FAMILY**  
**TIVERTON AND ADJOINING TOWNS, 1990 – 2001**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tiverton</u>	<u>Little Compton</u>	<u>Portsmouth</u>
1990	58	19	50
1991	37	21	35
1992	50	28	54
1993	52	23	91
1994	45	23	68
1995	42	19	68
1996	40	19	68
1997	51	24	58
1998	74	31	97
1999	60	17	100
2000	45	14	2
2001	<u>54</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>89</u>
Total New SF Units 1990-2001	608	271	780

Source: Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Research Division

In 2002, Tiverton issued building permits for an additional 47 single family homes and 39 manufactured (single family) homes as part of the Countryview Estates development. In 2003, permits were issued for 122 single family homes and 25 manufactured homes, and in 2004, permits were issued for 73 single family homes and 4 manufactured homes. Because of the activity in 2003, the average over the fifteen year period from 1990 through 2004 is 61 single family building permits per year.

**TABLE 6-5**  
**AUTHORIZED NEW HOUSING UNITS - MULTI-FAMILY**  
**TIVERTON AND SURROUNDING TOWNS, 1990 – 2001**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tiverton</u>	<u>Little Compton</u>	<u>Portsmouth</u>
1990	0	0	14
1991	7	0	6
1992	0	0	8
1993	7	0	4
1994	0	0	4
1995	28	0	8
1996	10	0	0
1997	10	0	26
1998	2	0	6
1999	8	0	0
2000	51	0	96
2001	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
Total New MF Units 1990-2001	125	0	174

Source: Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Research Division

In 2002, Tiverton issued building permits for 4 duplex units and 2 multi-family units. In 2003, permits were issued for 2 duplex units. There were no permits for either duplexes or multi-family units in 2004. The average over the fifteen year period is ten multi-family units per year. Combined with single family construction, this gives the town a total average of 70 additional residential units per year.

In addition to the expected growth in single family and manufactured homes, the number of single family units (attached) will increase significantly with the construction of the proposed Villages on Mount Hope Bay, an age restricted mixed use community. This mixed-use development on 94 acres of land overlooking the Sakonnet Passage and Mount Hope Bay will include a total of 290 townhouse units. The development, including a commercial component (lodging, restaurant, retail) and recreation (public walkways, beach club, boating activities, fishing pier) is expected to be fully built by 2007.

## **6.2 Housing Affordability**

Based on the Census response, Tiverton has a fairly high owner-occupancy rate. In 1990, it was estimated at about 82% and in 2000, about 80%. Based on occupants' responses, a range of housing values was also provided, as were monthly mortgage costs. For the renter occupied units, the occupants also provided monthly rental costs. These monthly costs are presented below in Table 6-6 for both 1990 and 2000 (percentage is based on the sample size).

**TABLE 6-6**  
**MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS, 1990 AND 2000**

<b><u>Monthly Owner Costs</u></b>	<b><u>1990 Number</u></b>	<b><u>1990 Percent</u></b>	<b><u>2000 Number</u></b>	<b><u>2000 Percent</u></b>
Less than \$300	9	0.3%	0	
\$300 to \$499	307	8.4%	19	0.5%
\$500 to \$699	401	11.0%	200	4.7%
\$700 to \$999	529	14.5%	604	14.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	634	17.4%	1,244	29.5%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	195	5.4%	456	10.8%
\$2,000 or more	67	1.8%	304	7.2%
No Mortgage	<u>1,498</u>	<u>41.2%</u>	<u>1,391</u>	<u>33.0%</u>
Total Units*	3,640	100.0%	4,218	100.0%

\* Specified owner occupied units

<b><u>Gross Rent</u></b>	<b><u>1990 Number</u></b>	<b><u>1990 Percent</u></b>	<b><u>2000 Number</u></b>	<b><u>2000 Percent</u></b>
Less than \$200	70	7.4%	37	3.1%
\$200 to \$299	53	5.6%	31	2.6%
\$300 to \$499	248	26.3%	186	15.3%
\$500 to \$749	344	36.5%	383	31.6%
\$750 to \$999	140	14.9%	220	18.1%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	27	2.9%	83	6.8%
\$1,500 or more	--		96	7.9%
No Cash Rent	<u>60</u>	<u>6.4%</u>	<u>177</u>	<u>14.6%</u>
Total Units**	942	100.0%	1,213	100.0%

\*\* Specified renter occupied units

Source: US Census

The table shows how monthly housing costs have shifted upward. While the \$1,000 to \$1,499 range for mortgages remains the dominant bracket, the actual number of occupants with this mortgage cost has doubled, while the numbers in much lower brackets have plunged and the number in the highest bracket has multiplied by a factor of four and a half. Among those homeowners who have a mortgage, the median monthly cost for 2000 is \$1,214; this is an increase from the 1990 Census figure of \$882. Similarly, while the \$500 to \$799 range for rents remains the dominant bracket, the numbers of occupants with lower rents has significantly dropped off and the numbers with higher rents increased noticeably. The median rent in 2000 is \$655; this is an increase from the 1990 Census figure of \$538.

To be considered affordable, monthly housing costs should not exceed 30 percent of household income. Based upon the same samples from the 2000 Census shown in Table 6-6, monthly costs as a percentage of income were provided. These monthly costs are presented below in Table 6-7 for both owner and renter occupied units (percentage is based on the sample size).

**TABLE 6-7**  
**MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS AS PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME**  
**2000 CENSUS**

	<b>Owner-Occupied</b>		<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	
	<b><u>Number of Units</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Units</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Less than 15%	1,274	30.2%	273	22.5%
15.0 to 19.9%	779	18.5%	122	10.1%
20.0 to 24.9%	565	13.4%	133	11.0%
25.0 to 29.9%	458	10.9%	53	4.4%
30.0 to 34.9%	297	7.0%	83	6.8%
35% or more	823	19.5%	336	27.7%
Not computed	<u>22</u>	<u>0.5%</u>	<u>213</u>	<u>17.5%</u>
Total Units	4,218	100.0%	1,213	100.0%

A large number of Tiverton residents paying a mortgage spend less than 15% of their income for housing costs. A significant majority, 80% (of the 4,218 specified owner occupied households), pay less than 30%. The numbers are less appealing for renters; rents more accurately reflect current market value while home ownership and fixed mortgage costs provide stability and long term affordability. While nearly one quarter (of the 1,213 specified renter occupied households) pay less than 15% of their income on rent, almost 28% spend more than 35%. Because the number of units for which a cost range was not computed is relatively high (213 units), it is difficult to state what the true proportion is. However, at least 34.5% of the renters pay 30% or more of their income on rent (although at least 48% pay less than 30%).

Based on a sample from the 2000 Census, the median income for Tiverton was estimated to be \$49,977 and the median family income to be \$58,917. The median selling price of an existing single family home in Tiverton has climbed steadily, from \$128,000 in 1990 to \$160,000 in 2000 (RI Economic Development Commission, Research Division). The national and state trends indicate that housing costs are continuing to increase at greater rates than incomes. In recent years sales prices have increased more sharply (the 2002 median selling price of an existing single family home in Tiverton was \$216,500), thereby insuring that the gap between prices and incomes has widened even further.

Table 6-8 summarizes real estate sales data for single family residences for Tiverton and its adjoining communities for 1999 to 2003, including the median sales value (half the prices higher and half lower).

**TABLE 6-8**  
**SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE SALES, 1999 - 2003**

<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Tiverton</u></b>	<b><u>Little Compton</u></b>	<b><u>Portsmouth</u></b>	<b><u>Rhode Island</u></b>
1999 Sales	105	20	233	9,659
<b>1999 Median Price</b>	<b>\$143,000</b>	<b>\$193,500</b>	<b>\$175,000</b>	<b>\$126,000</b>
2000 Sales	105	23	178	9,108
<b>2000 Median Price</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>	<b>\$277,000</b>	<b>\$179,950</b>	<b>\$135,976</b>
2001 Sales	94	20	163	9,113
<b>2001 Median Price</b>	<b>\$173,000</b>	<b>\$285,500</b>	<b>\$214,900</b>	<b>\$156,000</b>
2002 Sales	108	17	173	9,069
<b>2002 Median Price</b>	<b>\$216,500</b>	<b>\$335,000</b>	<b>\$290,000</b>	<b>\$188,150</b>
2003 Sales	90	24	177	9,189
<b>2003 Median Price</b>	<b>\$252,250</b>	<b>\$410,000</b>	<b>\$320,000</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>

Source: RI Association of Realtors

In just four years, while sales have remained steady, the median single family house price in Tiverton has increased by 76%. This is a very significant increase, although somewhat less than the median house price in the state as a whole, as well as the adjoining community of Portsmouth, both of which increased by 83%. The median house price in Little Compton by contrast, more than doubled, with an increase of 112%; this may be more reflective of what is happening in the southern part of Tiverton. The rapid increase in single family housing values in both the region and the state as a whole almost assuredly means that the next Census will show that monthly housing costs as a percentage of income have risen.

### **6.3 Low and Moderate Income Housing**

In general, affordable housing is defined as the supply of housing available to households whose incomes are at or below the median. Moderate and low income levels are defined by state or federal government programs that provide a funding subsidy (construction or rehabilitation of housing or rental subsidies). Moderate income is calculated as 50 to 80% of the median family income for a given community, and low income is calculated as 30 to 49% of the median (below 30% is considered very low income). For the year 2003, the median family income for most towns in Rhode Island (the average of those in the Providence Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Tiverton) was calculated to be \$58,400. The actual income limits to qualify as moderate or low income is based on family size; for a family of four, the moderate income limit is \$53,850, while the low income limit is \$33,860.

Under the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53), towns in Rhode Island, including Tiverton, are required to meet a 10% threshold of low or moderate income units among the total housing units. If this threshold is not met, the community is subject to an expedited review process that housing developers may utilize to gain approval of developments involving affordable units, typically 20% of the total number of units in the development. This procedure, defined as a comprehensive permit, is an alternate land use regulation that replaces local zoning and can supercede use, density and dimensional standards otherwise in place. The denial of such an application is subject to review by an appellate body, the State Housing Appeals Board, who can reverse the community's decision. However, the law also allows a community to develop an affordable housing plan (as part of the Housing component of its comprehensive plan) to meet the 10% goal. The finding that a comprehensive permit application for a housing development is not in conformance with the community's affordable housing plan or the comprehensive plan in general can be grounds for denial. The affordable housing plan is contained in Section 6.7.

In 2004, the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation counted 237 housing units in Tiverton (from a total of 6,283 year round housing units as measured by the 2000 Census) that qualify as low and moderate income units (i.e. funded by various state and federal subsidy programs):

- The Tiverton Housing Authority operates 45 units of housing for low income elderly at its complex at 99 Hancock Street.
- The Cumberland Affordable Housing Corporation has 51 apartments for very low income elderly nearby at 345 Hancock Street.
- SK Properties owns and manages 23 units for the elderly, disabled and handicapped off Stafford Road near Stafford Pond.
- The Dadson Mobile Estates on Bulgarmarsh Road includes 50 mobile homes that are low and moderate income units.
- The Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals has licensed six group homes in Tiverton which provide 50 beds that also count as low and moderate income units.
- There are 4 units at Apple Creek Apartments owned and managed by Church Community Housing Corporation.
- There are 14 single family homes with ownership acquired through a subsidy provided by Church Community Housing, consisting of 5 scattered throughout town and 9 constructed in 2003 on Windwood Drive.

By category, these properties total 119 elderly, 68 family and 50 special needs affordable units. The Church Community Housing Corporation, the non-profit housing organization serving Newport County, also owns and manages a 28 unit apartment complex on Winwood Drive. There are also about 96 families in Tiverton assisted by the Section 8 voucher program; 51 of these vouchers are assigned to the Tiverton Housing Authority. However, because these vouchers are transportable (can be taken outside of the community) they are excluded from the count. As of July, 2004 3.77% of Tiverton's housing units qualify as low and moderate income.

#### **6.4 Summary of Community Housing Needs and Programs**

Tiverton is predominantly a middle-income, family household community. Based on 2000 Census and other data, 14.6% (or 885 households from a total of 6,065) are very low income households; 11.8% (or 713 households) are low income; and 43.4% (or 2,360 households) are moderate income, leaving about 30% of the households above the moderate income level (Housing Data Base 2003 Update, Statewide Planning Program). Like most every other community in Rhode Island, Tiverton must address overall housing affordability for both prospective home owners and renters, as well as specifically address the shortfall in the 10% threshold required under the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act.

There is also a continuing need for housing for single-persons and the elderly, segments of the population where there is expected to be future growth. In 1990, non-family households constituted 22% of all households; in 2000, they constituted 27.5%. About half of those living alone are over the age of 65. Addressing the isolation and marginalization of the single elderly is a major mission of most senior housing programs. Low income elderly, both single and couples, require more housing; the Tiverton Housing Authority maintains a waiting list of more than 50 requests for units.

The 1990 Census showed 5.6% of the population of Tiverton below the poverty level. This statistic translated into approximately 297 households. Based on 2000 Census data, there are 130 families, or 683 individuals --- 4.5% of the population -- living below the poverty level. As of June 2002 there were 68 cases of welfare assistance, 119 cases of supplemental social security income (SSI), and 222 cases of food stamp participation (Housing Data Base 2003 Update, Statewide Planning Program). The housing needs of these low income families should be addressed.

Another area of housing need is accommodating the special needs of people with physical and mental disabilities. It is not clear how many individuals are affected in Tiverton; however the 2000 Census lists 480 cases of physical disability, 404 cases of mental disability and 144 cases of self-care disability (a single person may have more than one disability). The Town of Tiverton has been receptive to the siting of group homes and will continue to support the needs of the handicapped.

State housing programs will continue to be important to creating housing diversity and affordability. Administered by the RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation, the programs include mortgage loans for affordable apartments; tax credits to finance the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing; grants and low interest loans to serve as gap financing or seed money for construction and rehabilitation, and acquisition as well as rental assistance; and a rental housing production program, also for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable apartments. Such units qualify under the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act.

Individual programs include various homebuyer and home repair loans, and the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage Program (reverse mortgages for homeowners age 62 or

older). Tiverton also participates in the home repair program run by Church Community Housing Corporation. This program offers assistance to eligible families for fundamental housing repairs. The 2000 Census indicates that there are only 17 units in Tiverton which lack complete plumbing facilities (down from 32 in 1990). There are 51 which lack complete kitchen facilities (down from 103 in 1990).

## **6.5 Housing Goal and Objectives**

### **Goal**

**Encourage a diversity of housing types that meet the needs of all segments of the population of Tiverton, while maintaining the character of the community.**

### **Objectives**

- Encourage the preservation of the existing housing stock.
- Identify and control the development of future residential areas to allow a mixture of housing types including those targeted to the elderly, those of low and moderate income and the disabled.
- Implement a plan to meet the state mandated 10% of housing units as low and moderate income by the year 2025 (See Section 6.7 of this Housing Chapter).

## **6.6 Housing Policies**

### **Historic Preservation, Conservation and Enhancement**

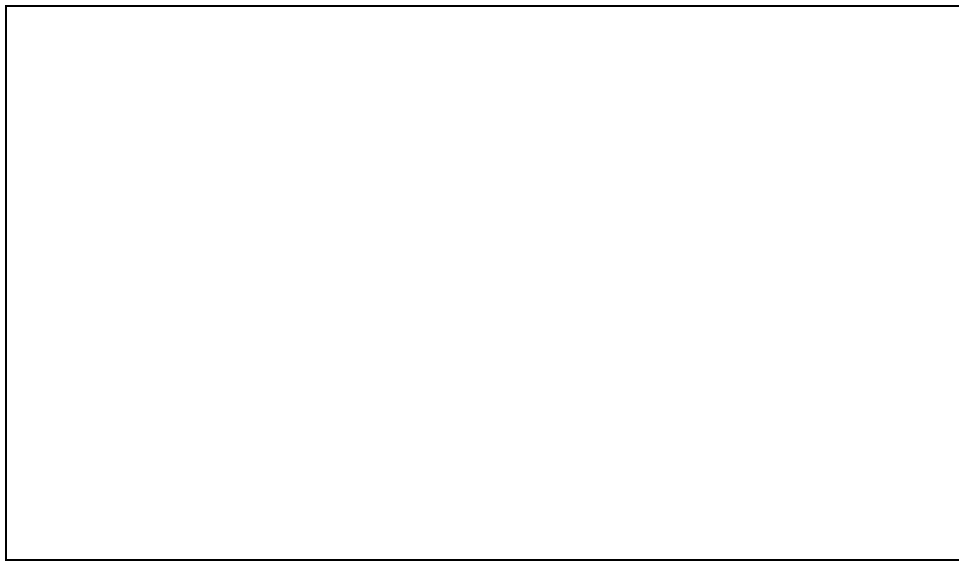
An intrinsic part of Tiverton's visual character is the presence of 17th, 18th and 19th century residential structures made of building materials and exhibiting architectural style and detail distinctive to the region's history. Given current and future developmental pressure, many of these dwelling are at risk of destruction, removal or severe remodeling, an irreplaceable loss to the town's quality of place. An Historic Preservation Advisory Board (recommended in the Natural and Cultural Resources Chapter) might provide advice and assistance to home owners on the preservation of these buildings, as well as document their history and elevate the community's knowledge and appreciation of them by means of education and outreach programs.

Developers of industrial, commercial, mixed-use and major subdivision projects should be encouraged to incorporate historic home preservation into their overall plans. Moreover, these developers should assure that new construction is compatible with the architectural style, scale and building materials of neighboring historic buildings.

**Policy 1: Require developers of sites containing historic structures to consider plans that conserve these structures and complement them with new structures of compatible scale, design and building materials.**

Some larger homes built prior to World War I may be at risk of deterioration because their size or location is no longer desirable in the housing market. In these instances, alternative uses, such as offices, condominiums, apartments, or bed and breakfast guesthouses, could be allowed, subject to controls to preserve the architectural integrity of the buildings and maintain the visual quality of Tiverton. Increasing the range of allowable uses in the existing structure generally improves the structure's value and, consequently, opportunities for preservation.

**Policy 2: Explore a broader range of permitted uses for large, older residential structures, including bed and breakfasts, and offices, subject to standards and controls which preserve the character of these areas and the architectural integrity of the structure.**



*Town policies must encourage the protection of Tiverton's architectural heritage*

Several large-scale and under utilized historic buildings are excellent candidates for age-restricted or low income housing use. Absent adaptive re-use, their fate is likely to be a sad and prolonged deterioration. The prime example is the 1874 Bourne Mill, notable in textile history as the first cotton mill in the world to introduce the Northrup weaving machines on a large scale. The granite block mill, with its landmark tower, is inextricably linked with the history of the village of North Tiverton, many of whose inhabitants found employment there. Moreover, the Bourne Mill is the cause of the first significant influx of foreign-born citizens into Tiverton, and as such, is a monument to the labor, skill and ingenuity of town's Portuguese, Irish, Italian, English and other ethnic communities.

**Policy 3: Encourage the adaptive re-use of large historic structures as housing units in order to expand the availability of affordable housing while preserving the town's history and quality of place.**

Architecturally significant buildings and historic structures are a community asset but owners generally have to bear the burden of the maintenance of the structure. Without strategies to remove some of this burden from owners, these buildings may fall into disrepair and eventually be lost to the community.

**Policy 4:** ~~Investigate sources of seed money for a revolving loan fund from such as was available from the State Office of Housing, Energy and Intergovernmental Relations,~~ to preserve historic and architecturally significant structures.

### **Mixture of Housing Types**

The predominance of single family homes in Tiverton contributes to its unique visual character. It is also a clear goal of this comprehensive plan, one which is reflected in the town's zoning, that lower density single family development occur in the large southern portion of town where the small town and historic character is most evident. Alternative housing opportunities for those whose needs are not met by the traditional single family home can be provided in the more densely developed portion of Tiverton, where permitted by zoning.

Projections indicate that Tiverton's population will continue to age, and household size will remain smaller than in previous periods (not accounting for migration into town as a result of new single family subdivisions). These smaller, older households will require different housing solutions to those presently offered within the town. In recent years, the town has addressed this by amending the zoning ordinance to allow two types of age restricted housing: the manufactured home elderly community (MHEC), which allowed the development of Countryview Estates, and the age restricted mixed use community (ARMUC), which allowed the development of the Villages on Mount Hope Bay. These developments and the construction of the Sakonnet Bay Manor, which includes both independent and assisted living, will help fulfill a need for both ends of the spectrum -- affordable and high end housing for older residents.

While there remains a strong need for additional housing for low and very low income elderly, there is also a need to provide housing options for moderate income older residents, or for smaller households (one and two persons households). The ARMUC regulations do not apply to the residential districts, allows mixed uses and carries the age restriction (55 years or older). Both the MHEC and ARMUC regulations also allow a more dense development (one dwelling unit per 6,000 square feet of suitable land area) than elsewhere in town, primarily because of a requirement for public water and sewer. These regulations do not have wide applicability throughout town.

Aside from these regulations, two family dwellings are permitted only in the Residential 30 and Residential 60 Zoning Districts, and multi-family dwellings or apartment houses are only allowed by special use permit in these districts. The R-30 District encompasses the northwest corner of town (west of Fish Road and on either side of the Main Road General Commercial District). The R-60 District includes a large parcel north of Souza

Road which was rezoned from Industrial in 2004, and generally the land to the east of Fish Road not zoned for industry and the residential areas on either side of Stafford Road. Because some of this land is ideally located for condominium development due to its highway access, future multi-family developments should be directed to this area.

**Policy 5: Strengthen and clarify zoning provisions that allow multi-family dwellings to encourage townhouses or condominium style developments as an alternative to single family developments in certain residential districts.**

As part of major revisions to the zoning ordinance in 2001, mixed use residential, a structure used for both residential and commercial (apartments over stores) is allowed by right in the General Commercial (GC) District and by special use permit in the Village Commercial (VC) District. The concept of providing smaller more affordable housing units in this manner should continue to be supported in Tiverton.

**Policy 6: Evaluate zoning provisions that allow mixed use residential to ensure that providing a residential component in new commercial development is encouraged.**



*Mixed use developments can help meet housing needs in Tiverton*

## **6.7 Affordable Housing Plan**

In 2003, Tiverton amended its zoning ordinance to govern comprehensive permit applications submitted under the provisions of the RI Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. The ordinance specifies application requirements and review procedures to give the town some means of control over such developments. The ordinance also provides proactive affordable housing provisions including a requirement that all applications for major residential developments (six or more lots) submit a mandatory alternative concept plan that sets aside a minimum of 20% of the lots or units as affordable (low and moderate). To further encourage developers, a density bonus of up to 30% can be

allowed by the Planning Board *from which* lots or units are set aside for construction of low or moderate income housing units. Granting the density bonuses gives the Planning Board the right to waive, at their discretion, lot dimensions such as minimum lot area and amount of unsuitable land. *The affordable housing section of the zoning ordinance was amended in May 2005 to encourage applicants of all residential developments to provide affordable units, and to give the Planning Board the ability to allow duplex units as low and moderate income housing in districts where they would otherwise not be allowed.*

In addition to inclusionary zoning requirements, Tiverton must develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve the state mandated goal of 10% low and moderate income units. This strategy, in the form of an affordable housing plan, is incorporated herein as a component of this Housing Chapter of the Tiverton Comprehensive Plan. To meet the state requirements for an affordable housing plan, this section contains three parts: an analysis of current and expected deficiencies over time in the numbers of low and moderate units, a description of housing needs based on the federal Housing and Urban Development's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, and a number of specific strategies, including the promotion of specific projects, to meet the 10% goal over a 20 year period.

### **Low and Moderate Housing Units Needed**

As stated in Section 6.3, at the date of these amendments to the Tiverton Comprehensive Plan, the town has 237 low and moderate income units (RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation). Based on the 2000 Census, which counted 6,283 year round units (from the total of 6,474 housing units), the town is deficient by 391 units ( $6,283 \times 0.10 = 628 - 237 = 391$ ). However, as the town continues to add housing units through new subdivisions, and the completion of the large ongoing projects (Countryview Estates, Villages on Mount Hope Bay), the need will become greater. Since the 2000 Census, the town has added a number of units as counted through requests for building permits. These include 409 single family units and 61 multi-family units for a total of 470 units; this would give the town 6,944 housing units as of 2005 (see Section 6.1, Tables 6-4 and 6-5, total of building permits issued from 2000-2004 in Tiverton for each category). To obtain an accurate count of the affordable housing deficit as of 2005 (the base year for the affordable housing plan), the number representing 10% of these permits (47) has been added to the number above to give Tiverton an estimated deficit of 438 units.

In 1999, the town undertook a build-out analysis based on the zoning in place at that time, as well as the zoning proposed, an effort which provided the basis for wide-spread map and text amendments (adopted in 2001). According to calculations based on the amount of available developable land within each residential district, the build-out analysis estimated that approximately 4,438 new units could eventually be added (considerably less than that allowed under the zoning in place at that time). For the affordable housing plan, this number was adjusted upwards based on the following factors: an increase in the amount of undeveloped land in the R-60 District (per the rezoning mentioned above); the construction of Villages on Mount Hope Bay (previously within an Industrial District and not anticipated in the build-out); and the increase in the

number of units allowed in the Countryview Estates development over that which would have occurred in a conventional development allowed by the underlying zoning. Accounting for these factors, 692 units were added to the build-out number for a total of 5,130 units.

Because the build-out analysis was done very close in time to the 2000 Census, it was assumed that the numbers generated by each activity (one counting units represented by existing development, and the other estimating units represented by potential development) could be added together. This resulting figure is an estimate of the total number of residential units in Tiverton under conditions of full build-out: **11,604 residential units** ( $6,474 + 5,130 = 11,604$ ). Based on trends over the last fifteen years, Tiverton has an average of 70 building permits a year (see Section 6.1, following Table 6-5). This means that build-out is expected in about 70 years ( $5,130 \text{ additional units} / 70 \text{ units per year} = 73 \text{ years}$ ) from the date of the count. At full build-out, assuming that the same requirements for low and moderate income housing are in place, and estimating that 98% of the total units are year-round, the town will need to provide 1,140 affordable units (900 additional units).

### Housing Needs Analysis by CHAS Data

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has prepared a Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) nationwide database based upon 2000 Census data. This database provides a means for a community to examine the housing needs and problems of its residents at all income levels. The CHAS data chart for Tiverton is contained in the appendix to this Housing Chapter.

Within the chart are the numbers of households by type: elderly, small related (2-4 persons), large related (5 or more) and other, in two general categories, renters and owners. Numbers of households by type are shown for three income categories: households with incomes less than or equal to 30% of median family income (MFI); households with incomes greater than 30% MFI but less than or equal to 50% MFI; and households with income greater than 50% MFI but less than or equal to 80% MFI. Percentages of these households that have “housing problems” are provided. Housing problems are defined as a cost burden greater than 30% of income and/or overcrowding and/or without complete kitchen or plumbing facilities. The data provided in the chart is used to calculate a total number for each type of household (both renters and owners) which experiences housing problems (these calculations are shown following the chart in the appendix to this chapter). These numbers are then added to give a total number of households experiencing housing problems and from this total a proportionate share by household type is calculated. For Tiverton, this can be summarized as follows:

Elderly Households in need:	591	45%
Total Family Households in need	431	33%
Total Other Households in need	<u>279</u>	<u>21%</u>
Total	1,301	100%

## **Strategies to Address Affordable Housing Needs**

This section of the affordable housing plan identifies specific strategies to be followed to provide the needed low and moderate income housing units in Tiverton for its residents. Meeting the goal of 10% affordable units as defined requires certain steps on the part of the town. However, it also requires the active involvement of the development community, as well as the Church Community Housing Corporation, a private non-profit organization dedicated to providing housing options for low and moderate income individuals and families.

While it is estimated that full build out will not occur in Tiverton until about the year 2070, the town has prepared a plan to meet the affordable housing goal over a twenty year period. Once reached, the percentage of affordable housing will continue to grow given the strategies that the town will be implementing.

## **Land Development Mandates and Incentives**

Tiverton addresses housing development, and affordable housing in particular, through various components of its land development regulation -- the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. Contained in both regulations is control of density through the restriction of land with certain physical constraints (wetlands, steep slopes) when determining the number of lots allowed, and the maintenance of rural character by the requirement that certain new subdivisions take the form of rural residential developments. The town has also developed a policy in regards to the extension of water and sewers. Promoting affordable housing is done in this context of regulating density and protecting town character.

As stated above, the town's zoning ordinance requires consideration of the set aside of 20% of the lots in larger subdivisions for low and moderate income housing, *but encourages this in all residential developments*. In addition, a density bonus of up to 30% (over the number of units allowed under zoning) may be allowed *as an incentive to the developer to increase the numbers of affordable units by adding some market rate units*. Discretion is given to the Planning Board in regards to the requirements for set-asides and the allowance of density bonuses.

It is also proposed that the town focus more directly on multi-family development as a way to provide affordable units. While the recent trends for multi-family development show little activity in this category (with the exception of the Sakonnet Bay Manor), the condominium or townhouse style of multi-family development may represent a new trend in Tiverton. *The assumption is made that about 20 units a year, on average, will be townhouse style units. Such multi-family developments are allowed by right in the R-30 and R-60 Districts, which calculates allowable density based upon the number of units over two, as well as on the number of bedrooms over two bedrooms per unit. Roughly half of the land in the R-60 District is developable (approximately 1,300 acres out of 2,650 acres), as is about one-fifth of the land in the R-30 District (approximately 200 acres out of 1,000).* The trend toward condominium style development with a significant

affordable component will be encouraged in north Tiverton. It is proposed that future multi-family developments be subjected to an increase in the mandatory set asides to 30% affordable housing units.

Given the available land and the recent historical trend of residential growth at an average of 71 housing units a year (*61 single family and single family attached units, and 10 multi-family units*), the set aside provisions alone will have a tremendous impact on the number of affordable units available. *A review of the residential development occurring over several previous years indicates that approximately 10% of the housing units were generated by minor subdivisions (five or fewer lots). Such developments are not included in the mandatory 20% set aside provision in the zoning ordinance. Therefore, for the purposes of this plan, the number of future lots impacted by this provision is assumed to be an average of 55 single family units and 20 multifamily units per year. Because of the trend toward condo-style development, and the availability of land in the zoning districts allowing this type of development, the number of multi-family units is expected to be double that of recent years (all of the multi-family units are also expected to be part of a major subdivision or development).* (Note: some of the building permits pulled in the near future may be for already approved projects for which no affordable units are provided). **If, over a twenty year period approximately 1,100 single family units are built, 220 of these will be affordable, and 400 multi-family units are built, 120 of these will be affordable.**

In addition, by encouraging the use of density bonuses, the town can expect to create additional affordable units as part of the subdivision or land development process. To preserve town character, this should be done as part of rural residential developments, making use of the clustering concept to protect open space and important natural and cultural features, i.e., density bonuses allowed provided the affordable units are creatively located and dispersed within the development. The following assumptions are made: 30% of the developers will take advantage of the program; the projects are allowed 30% more units; and half of the extra units are assigned to persons of low and moderate income. **This would result in approximately 68 additional affordable housing units, both single family and multi-family (75 units per year x 20 years = 1,500 units x 0.30 = 450 units as a base for density bonus x 0.3 = 135 additional units/2 = 68).**

In addition to provisions in the zoning ordinance to require set asides and encourage density bonuses, there are other options the town will undertake to increase its stock of affordable housing. One of the major resources, if not the most important, is the expansion of the sewer lines in the northern portion of the town. The sewer lines extend from Fall River down to the industrial park off of Route 24. Infill sewer lines are being developed with CDBG funds in the northern part of Tiverton as well. This provides Tiverton with a rare opportunity to direct higher density development to sewered areas with the requirement that much of this development respond to the need for affordable housing.

*In general, the bulk of the scattered single family units to be provided through inclusionary zoning will occur in the southern portion of town (south of Bulgarmarsh Road). Amendments to the affordable housing section of the zoning ordinance in May 2005 include the requirement that bonus units within the Nonquit Pond Watershed Protection Overlay District be served by advanced on-site sewage disposal treatment systems. Multi-family units will all be provided in the north portion of town and will likely require connection to public water and sewer. A policy for the extension of public water and sewer is being developed and must address the need to balance growth management goals with the provision of affordable units.*

### **Town Center/Lifestyle Center Proposals**

Starting in 2003 and throughout all of 2004, the Tiverton Planning Board, and the town in general, worked on developing zoning regulations to govern future development on commercially zoned parcels and other strategically located parcels in the Route 24 area. The area is under immense pressure for the development of a regional mall and the town would like any development to be done as a planned or mixed use development that includes a residential component.

A moratorium on development of certain parcels in the Route 24 area was passed by the Town Council in 2003, and a Town Center Planning Study, funded by a grant (CDBG) provided through the Church Community Housing Corporation, was completed in 2004. After numerous public workshops and Planning Board public meetings, it was determined that a town center or village concept was the most desirable development approach. The town center concept would include a mixture of uses such as retail, restaurant, office, municipal, public and residential. The study resulted in a zoning overlay proposal to allow a certain level of retail development by right and additional development (measured by the square footage of proposed retail) when land is set aside for municipal, public and/or residential use. The residential development, at a density greater than that allowed by the underlying or comparable residential zoning, would require a 30% set aside for low and moderate income units.

While the situation, as of this writing, is evolving, the town expects development to occur in these critically located areas of town, and that development to include a residential component. Based on the town center overlay zoning regulations, a “Tiverton Town Center” mixed-use development could occur in a Highway Commercial area between Souza Road and Route 24. This would include 50 residential units, 15 of these affordable. Another development, submitted as a concept plan by the developer in an R-40 District abutting Route 24 to the south, would more accurately be described as a “lifestyle center” where the residential use is predominant. The “Tiverton Village” proposal would have some office, retail and public uses, but support 115 residential units in a mixture of housing styles, with 35 set aside as affordable. **Together these developments would generate 50 affordable units.**

### **Bourne Mill**

The Bourne Mill in northern Tiverton, described in Section 6.6 above, is an excellent candidate for a mixed use redevelopment concept. The Bourne Mill complex is located on a 21 acre parcel along the Fall River border in the western part of town, with frontage on Cook Pond (part of Massachusetts). While there are a number of outbuildings to be dismantled, the main structure, built in 1888, is a five-story granite mill building. It is presently used for the storage of personal effects for members of the military, but has no plumbing or heat.

However, the property has connections to public water and sewer. It is accessed by State Avenue (a paved road running along the state border) with potential additional access via an unimproved but platted public street, Mill Street. Positive site qualities include historic architecture, easy access to Route 24, walking proximity to grocery and retail stores, as well as a health care clinic, and reasonable proximity to a public elementary school. Negative site qualities include possible contamination, since the mill was once used for felt production, a high water table, as evidenced through the flooded basement (*although not within either the 100 year or 500 year floodplain*), and possible structural instability due to neglect.

Conversion of the mill to housing, with a significant portion of the units set aside as affordable, would provide sorely needed rental units in Tiverton, as well as improve the neighborhood by removing a possible environmental hazard, and beautify a landmark parcel located at the gateway to the town. It is estimated that the mill could be rehabilitated and the surrounding area redeveloped to provide a total of 160 units, with **48 of these units affordable**. Figure 6-2 shows a potential redevelopment concept for the Bourne Mill area. While little interest has been shown thus far in redeveloping the Bourne Mill complex, its desirable qualities in conjunction with the demand for apartment units (in both Tiverton and Fall River) will eventually make it attractive for reuse. Because the property is located within an Industrial District, (which specifically prohibits residential uses), the village center overlay regulations should apply to this parcel as well.



*The Bourne Mill*



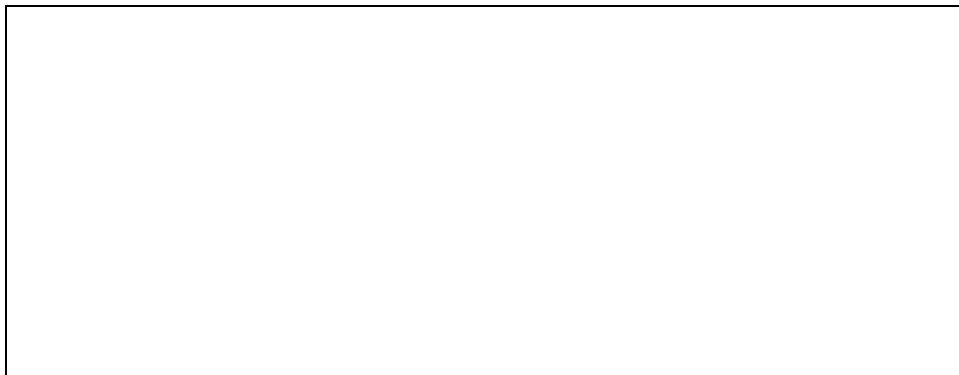
### **Artist Colony**

The Town of Tiverton strongly encourages arts and artists in the community. Areas such as Tiverton Four Corners have capitalized on the strong relationship between the town's rural New England character and its artistic proclivities. The town's Arts Committee has regular showings of resident artists at Town Hall. However, artists often are challenged by the high cost of space for both living and working, which is why many (typically urban) communities have arts overlay districts with relaxed zoning regulations and tax incentives to encourage artists.

Tiverton is fortunate to have a resident landowner and artist who has expressed an interest in using a substantial portion of his 170-acre farm to establish an affordable housing artist colony. It is envisioned that, with minor changes to the rural residential development regulations, an artist colony could be created with the appearance of a large farm that has a number of outbuildings. The colony would resemble the Hancock Shaker Village depicted in Figure 6-3. Given the size of the farm and the character desired, **50 affordable artist units** could be developed. The property owner is currently working with Church Community Housing Corporation to make this project a reality. *The artist colony will make use of a variety of subsidies to provide the affordable units including a density bonus, HOME funds, possibly CDBG funds and low income housing tax credits. It is envisioned that the colony will be owned in the form of a coop and that all the residents will meet HUD income guidelines for low and moderate income persons.*

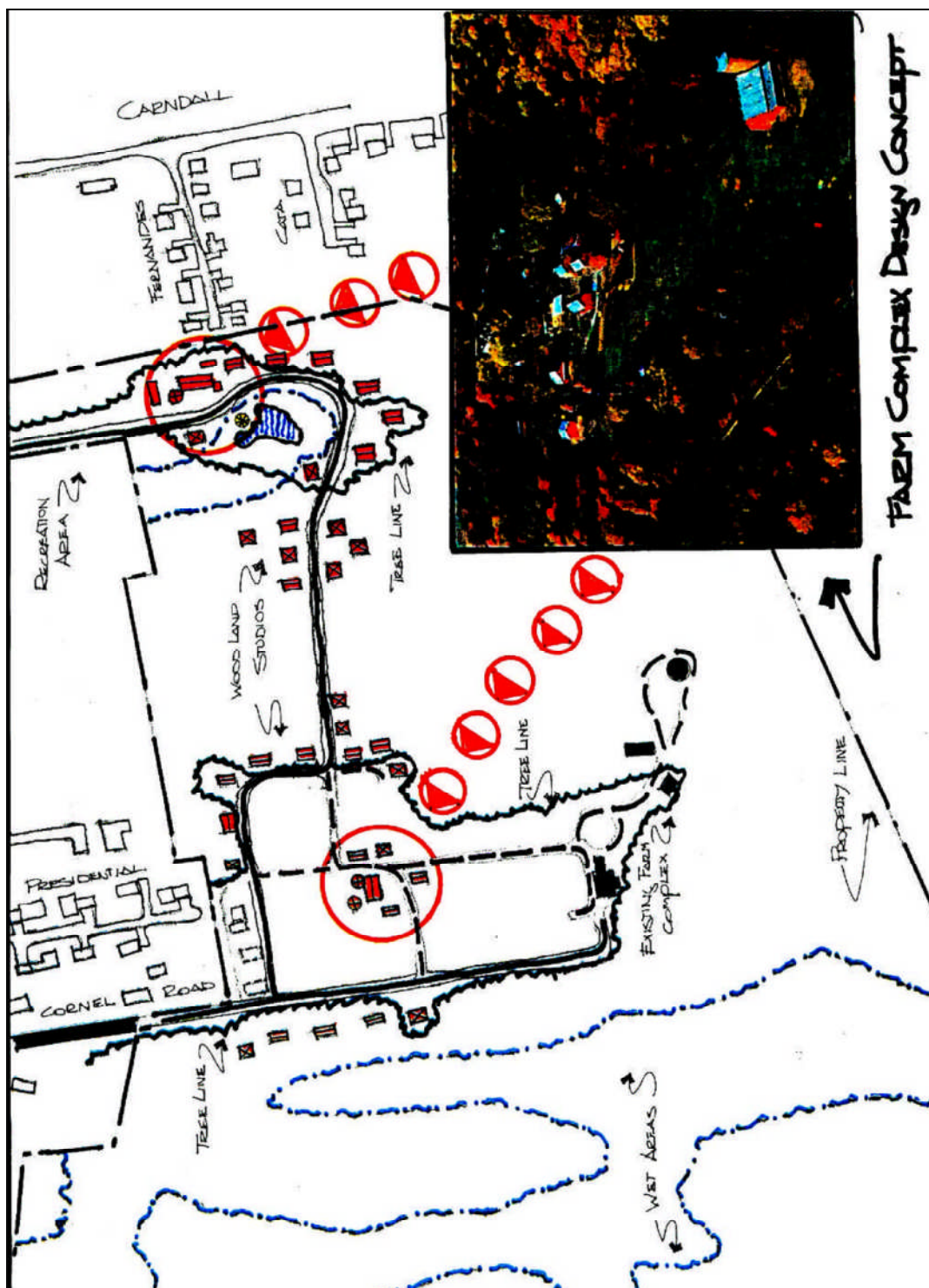
### **Elderly Housing on Hancock Street**

The Tiverton Housing Authority and the Cumberland Affordable Housing Corporation now provide a total of 96 low income elderly units in two separate structures on Hancock Street (along the state border in the northeast corner of the town). There is a great demand for additional low and very low income elderly units. The Housing Authority has 8 undeveloped acres as part of its property that is available for the construction of another low income elderly complex, pending availability of funding. It is estimated that an additional **50 affordable elderly units** could be provided through a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) construction grant.



*The Housing Authority provides much needed housing for the elderly*

**FIGURE 6-2**  
**ARTIST COLONY CONCEPT**



### **Affordable Housing Commission**

In Tiverton, as in many communities, residents need to understand what affordable housing is and who is likely to benefit from efforts to increase its availability. While this plan defines affordable housing and identifies the resident workers that will benefit by these programs, general education of the public is needed on a continuing basis. For this reason and the need to account for the efforts of the town to secure affordable housing for its residents, an Affordable Housing Commission should be established.

The Affordable Housing Commission will be able to work closely with the Planning Board in gauging the town's success. Once well established and up to speed on programs and activities, the commission could make suggestions to improve implementation. The commission could work with Church Community Housing Corporation (described below) to identify possible existing housing units that currently meet the criteria for affordability but are not counted as affordable because *no subsidy is provided to ensure affordability over a minimum 30 year period. Subsidies can be in the form of a federal, state or local funding program for the construction or rehabilitation of a housing unit with affordability provided through a land lease or deed restriction in place for a period of not less than 30 years from initial occupancy. A rehabilitation subsidy can also be used in conjunction with efforts to acquire a fair market stake in the property so that the structure itself can then be resold to a qualifying family.*

*The commission will also work with the developer of Countryview Estates to direct subsidies to that portion of the development that remains unbuilt so that these particular units can remain affordable. While the selling price of the units in the development has been well within the affordability range, a subsidy must be applied to ensure their permanent affordability.*

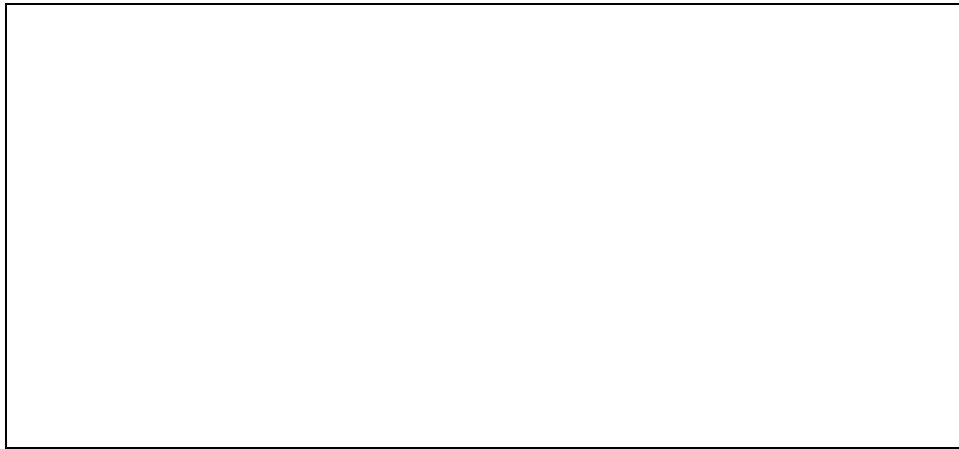
*It is proposed that the commission will eventually establish 130 additional affordable units, including 10 special needs units, over the 20 year period. Sixty units will be established by use of the CDBG Rehabilitation Loans and Grants Program in conjunction with cash incentives and tax breaks assigned to existing dwellings in town. Many of the houses in north Tiverton meet the description of affordability now and are not likely to appreciate much faster than the affordability rate. A local affordable housing commission that knows its town and residents can identify these units. In addition to ensuring long term affordability of these units, the quality of life of the owner is enhanced by the physical improvements to their houses. The Church Community Housing Corporation presently provides loans for the rehabilitation of housing units in Tiverton at an average rate of 10 per year. If only 15% of these homeowners agree to a long term restriction on the affordability of the unit, 60 low/moderate units would be provided over the 20 year period. The other 70 units will be established from those Countryview Estates units yet to be built. A tax subsidy granted to the owner of the land in order to sell the units as low/moderate, or the granting of waivers on density or other local regulations by the Planning Board can be given in exchange for the appropriate deed restriction.*

### **Resources and Education**

In addition to land development strategies and the promotion of specific projects, the Town of Tiverton is proposing to take advantage of available resources and education programs to accomplish its goal of providing additional affordable housing. Tiverton has a number of resources at its disposal, one of the most important being the services of the Church Community Housing Corporation.

The Church Community Housing Corporation (CCHC) has been instrumental in providing affordable housing in the Town of Tiverton for 30 years. CCHC owns 75 rental units within the town and has provided 25 home ownership opportunities for Tiverton residents through its land trust program that has become the model within the entire state in securing home ownership for moderate income residents. CCHC has extensive knowledge of funding programs and non-profit organizations that provide funding for low and moderate income resident housing.

CCHC can also work with local developers, through a model program it has developed to illustrate to developers how it is possible to provide affordable home ownership units without losing money. The program will tie funding sources and a gift from the developer to the project, enabling the developer to secure a federal tax deduction. If successful, this could provide an incentive rather than putting the developer in a confrontational situation with the town over the affordable housing requirements.



*The provision of affordable housing will serve the needs of young families in Tiverton*

### **Summary**

In summary, the Town of Tiverton will meet its goal and obligation to its residents to provide 10% of its total housing stock as affordable by 2025. Table 6-9 shows what the town is expecting from each of the strategies once implemented. The table breaks out the number of affordable housing units to be provided in five-year increments.

**TABLE 6-9 Amended**  
**TOTAL NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE UNITS**  
**CREATED BY STRATEGY AND YEAR**

	<u>Total</u> <u>Units</u>	<u>Affordable</u> <u>Units</u>	<u>Affordable Units over Five Year Increments</u>			
			<u>2005-10</u>	<u>2010-15</u>	<u>2015-20</u>	<u>2020-25</u>
Dwelling Units; 2005	6,944	237				
<u>Strategy</u>						
Mandated 20% SF	<i>1,100</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Additional SF*</i>		<i>120</i>				
Mandated 30% MF	400	120	30	30	30	30
Bonus Units Total	<i>135</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>17</i>
Town Center (30%)	50	15	15			
Lifestyle Center (30%)	115	35	35			
Bourne Mill (30%)	160	48		48		
Artist Colony (100%)	50	50	50			
Elderly Housing	50	50		50		
Affordable Housing Commission Efforts	<u>--</u>	<u>130</u>	85	15	15	15
Total Units; 2025	<i>9,124</i>	<i>973</i>				

*\* Units expected to be generated by minor subdivisions; 6 units per year x 20 years = 120 units*

By 2025, there will be 973 affordable housing units (237 existing + 736 additional) and an estimated 9,124 total housing units in Tiverton. Again, assuming that 98% of these total units are year-round (8,942 units), 10.9% of housing units will be affordable. Table 6-10 below breaks out the additional 736 affordable units by type, single (*and multi*) family and elderly, within each five year increment.

**TABLE 6-10 Amended**  
**AFFORDABLE UNITS BY TYPE GENERATED IN FIVE YEAR INCREMENTS**

<u>Period</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Family Owner</u>	<u>Family Rental</u>	<u>Elderly</u>	<u>Elderly Owner</u>	<u>Elderly Rental</u>	<u>Special Needs</u>	<u>Total</u>
2005-10	192	162	30	90	85	5	5	287
2010-15	145	92	53	65		65	5	215
2015-20	117	97	20					117
2020-25	<u>117</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>117</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>736</b>
Percent	77.6%			21%			1.4%	100%

*To clarify, it is assumed that in the first five year period, the family units will be generated as follows: 102 units through the subdivision process, 10 from the town center project, 20 from the lifestyle center project, 50 from the artist colony, and 10 units from the efforts of the Affordable Housing Commission, for a total of 192 units. Of this total, 162 are shown to be owner occupied and 30 to be rentals. This breakdown is based on the assumptions that 20% or 20 of the 102 subdivision units, and a third or 10 of the 30 total town center/lifestyle units, will be rentals.*

*For that same period, the elderly units will be generated as follows: 5 units from the town center project, 15 from the lifestyle center project and 70 from the assignment of units from Countryview, for a total of 90 units. Of the 15 total town center/lifestyle units, 5 are assumed to be rentals. The Countryview units will all be owner occupied.*

*In the second five year period, the family units will be generated as follows: 102 units through the subdivision process, 33 units from the Bourne Mill project, and 10 units from the efforts of the Affordable Housing Commission, for a total of 145 units. Of the 102 subdivision units, it is again assumed that 20% or 20 units would be rental, as would all of the 33 Bourne Mill units, resulting in 53 rental units, with the remaining 82 subdivision units combined with the 10 Affordable Housing Commission units for 92 owner occupied units. For that same period, the elderly units will be generated as follows: 15 units from Bourne Mill and 50 from the new elderly housing complex, all rental units.*

*For the last two five year periods, the affordable units will consist of those single and multi-family owner occupied units generated through the subdivision process, with the 80%/20% breakdown of owner occupied versus rental units again assumed. However, all of the 15 Affordable Housing Commission units generated during each five year period are assumed to be family owner-occupied units (as opposed to 10 family and 5 special needs units assumed for the earlier two periods).*

While the CHAS data provided in the second section of the Affordable Housing Plan identifies a significant proportional need for elderly housing (45% elderly and 55% family and other), the town (as counted in July 2004) has 119 units of low and moderate income elderly housing out of the total of 237 units (which also includes 68 family and 50 special needs units). This represents 50% of the total. By 2025 the numbers and percentages will be as follows:

Elderly:	$119 + 155 = 274$	(28%)
Family:	$68 + 571 = 639$	(66%)
Other:	$\frac{50}{237} + \frac{10}{736} = \frac{60}{973}$	(6%)
Total:	$237 + 736 = 973$	100%

*Although this does not match the proportional need for elderly housing as reflected in the CHAS data, as a general policy, the Town of Tiverton does not want to promote age restricted affordable housing at the expense of meeting the considerable demand for affordable housing for younger people and families. Much of the demand for affordable age restricted units is being met by the Countryview Estates, which is a very successful development in this regard. Although this plan proposes that only the unbuilt units have a subsidy applied in order to assign these units as affordable, the market price of all the units has met the income limits for a moderate income couple, and will likely remain so in the future as they are resold.*

*In addition, as the town is reviewing site specific projects, such as the Bourne Mill or the town center or lifestyle center projects, at least one-third of the units will be required to be set aside as age restricted.*

## **6.8     *Affordable Housing Policies***

The plan for affordable housing concludes with a number of policies required for implementation, described below and incorporated as part of this Housing Chapter, followed by an implementation strategies summary, contained in Table 6-11.

- Policy 7:**        **Require that all future multi-family developments present a plan that sets aside a minimum of 30% of the units as affordable (low and moderate). Continue to require that all single family developments present a plan that sets aside 20% of the units as affordable.**
- Policy 8:**        **Adopt and enforce zoning ordinance requirements to allow the development of mixed-use town center and lifestyle center developments that require such developments to set aside a minimum of 30% of the housing units as affordable.**
- Policy 9:**        **Work with the Church Community Housing Corporation and other entities to redevelop the Bourne Mill complex into a mixed use development that includes a significant number of affordable housing units.**
- Policy 10:**       **Support the development of specialized residential compounds, such as artist colonies, which provide affordable housing options in the more rural portions of town.**
- Policy 11:**       **Establish an Affordable Housing Commission to monitor and actively promote the development of affordable housing units in town.**
- Policy 12:**       **Amend the Zoning Ordinance so that all comprehensive permit applications submitted to the Town of Tiverton are evaluated according to the goals and policies set forth in this component of the Housing Element of the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan.**

**TABLE 6-11 Amended**  
**SUMMARY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b><u>Resources/ Subsidies</u></b>
<b>Non-development</b>			
Zoning Amendments: <i>Amend Low/Mod Housing Article</i>	Planning Board/ Town Council	Six months	<i>Town resources</i>
<i>Special development districts regulations*</i>		<i>Nine months to a year</i>	<i>Town resources</i>
Establish: Affordable Housing Commission	Town Council	<i>Within a year</i>	<i>Town resources</i>
Qualify existing units	Housing Commission/ CCHC**	Over time	<i>Town/CCHC resources</i>
Work w/ Countryview <i>developer</i>	Housing Commission/ <i>Planning Board</i>	Six months to three years	<i>Local tax subsidies/ Regulation waivers</i>
<b>Development</b>			
Land development set asides/density bonuses	Private Developers/ Planning Board/ Housing Commission	Over time	<i>HOME/CDBG funds Density bonuses</i>
Town Center/Lifestyle Center Projects	Private Developers/ Planning Board/ Housing Commission	Within five years	<i>Density bonuses Tax incentives CDBG funds</i>
Bourne Mill	Housing Commission/ CCHC/ Private Developers	Five to ten years	<i>CDBG funds Tax incentives Historic and housing tax credits</i>
Artist Colony	Private Developer/ CCHC/ Planning Board	Within three years	<i>HOME/CDBG funds Tax credits Density bonuses</i>
Elderly Housing	Housing Authority	Within ten years	<i>HUD grant</i>

\* *To allow Bourne Mill redevelopment and town center/lifestyle center developments*

\*\* Church Community Housing Corporation

## HOUSING CHAPTER APPENDIX TIVERTON 2000 CHAS DATA

### Housing Problems Output for All Households

Name of Jurisdiction: Tiverton town, Rhode Island			Source of Data: CHAS Data Book			Data Current as of: 2000					
	Renters					Owners					
Household by Type, Income & Housing Problem	Elderly (1 & 2 members)	Small Related (2 to 4 members)	Large Related (5 or more members)	All Other	Total Renters	Elderly (1 & 2 members)	Small Related (2 to 4 members)	Large Related (5 or more mem- bers)	All Other	Total Own- ers	Total House holds
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(I)	(J)	(K)
1. Household Income <= 50% MFI	272	94	0	144	510	573	189	18	81	861	1,371
2. Household Income <=30% MFI	178	64	0	110	352	270	74	0	44	388	740
3. % with any housing problems	55.1	84.4	N/A	72.7	65.9	77.8	100.0	N/A	100.0	84.5	75.7
4. % Cost Burden >30%	52.8	84.4	N/A	63.6	61.9	77.8	100.0	N/A	100.0	84.5	73.8
5. % Cost Burden >50%	41.6	54.7	N/A	54.5	48.0	44.4	94.6	N/A	90.9	59.3	53.9
6. Household Income >30 to <=50% MFI	94	30	0	34	158	303	115	18	37	473	631
7. % with any housing problems	53.2	66.7	N/A	58.8	57.0	48.8	60.9	77.8	89.2	56.0	56.3
8. % Cost Burden >30%	48.9	66.7	N/A	58.8	54.4	48.8	60.9	77.8	89.2	56.0	55.6
9. % Cost Burden >50%	40.4	33.3	N/A	58.8	43.0	23.1	39.1	22.2	67.6	30.4	33.6
10. Household Income >50 to <=80% MFI	59	95	14	63	231	249	300	59	114	722	953
11. % with any housing problems	32.2	21.1	71.4	76.2	42.0	25.7	43.3	66.1	47.4	39.8	40.3
12. % Cost Burden >30%	32.2	21.1	0.0	76.2	37.7	21.7	43.3	33.9	47.4	35.7	36.2
13. % Cost Burden >50%	32.2	0.0	0.0	6.3	10.0	6.0	15.0	16.9	3.5	10.2	10.2
14. Household Income >80% MFI	54	249	44	110	457	450	2,135	310	375	3,270	3,727
15. % with any housing problems	7.4	1.6	9.1	0.0	2.6	8.9	11.7	24.2	29.3	14.5	13.1
16. % Cost Burden >30%	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	8.9	10.5	14.5	29.3	12.8	11.4
17. % Cost Burden >50%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.7	0.0	5.3	1.4	1.2
18. Total Households	385	438	58	317	1,198	1,272	2,624	387	570	4,853	6,051
19. % with any housing problems	44.4	22.4	24.1	46.7	36.0	36.3	20.0	33.1	42.3	27.9	29.5
20. % Cost Burden >30	42.3	21.5	0.0	43.5	33.0	35.5	19.0	20.4	42.3	26.2	27.5
21. % Cost Burden >50	34.0	10.3	0.0	26.5	21.7	16.9	6.7	3.6	15.6	10.2	12.4

#### Definitions:

**Any housing problems:** cost burden greater than 30% of income and/or overcrowding and/or without complete kitchen or plumbing facilities

**Other housing problems:** overcrowding (1.01 or more persons per room) and/or without complete kitchen or plumbing facilities

**Elderly households:** 1 or 2 person household, either person 62 years old or older

**Renter:** Data does not include renters living on boats, RVs or vans.

**Cost Burden:** The fraction of a household's total gross income spent on housing costs. For renters, housing costs include rent paid by tenant plus utilities. For owners, housing costs include mortgage payment, taxes, insurance and utilities.

**HOUSING CHAPTER APPENDIX, Cont.**

A summary of the CHAS housing problems output for Tiverton is provided below.

Elderly Renters

178 (# households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 55% + 94 (# households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 53% + 59 (# households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 32% = 167 with housing problems.

Elderly Owners

270 (# households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 78% + 303 (# households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 49% + 249 (# households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 26% = 424 elderly households with problems.

Family Renters

64 (# small households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 84% + 30 (# small households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 67% + 95 (# small households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 21% + 14 (# large households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 71% = 104 with housing problems.

Family Owners

74 (# small households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 100% + 115 (# small households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 61% + 300 (# small households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 43% + 18 (# large households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 78% + 59 (# large households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 66% = 326 with housing problems.

All Other Renters

110 (# households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 73% + 34 (# households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 59% + 63 (# households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 76% = 148 with housing problems.

All Other Owners

44 (# households  $\leq$  30% MFI) x 100% + 37 (# households  $>30\%$  to  $\leq 50\%$  MFI) x 89% + 114 (# households  $>50\%$  to  $\leq 80\%$  MFI) x 47% = 131 with housing problems.

Elderly Households in need:	591
Total Family Households in need	431
Total Other Households in need	<u>279</u>
Total	1,301

## **7.0 SERVICES AND FACILITIES** *Note: This chapter is entirely rewritten*

This chapter addresses all local government and other public services and facilities related to public safety, education, community services and utilities. Some of the services that Tiverton residents enjoy are provided by the annual real estate tax. These include police, fire, schools, libraries and other community services. Others are paid by the recipient, as in public water service and sewers. All affect the public health, safety and welfare of Tiverton's citizens. The locations of municipal buildings are shown in Figure 7-1.

### **7.1 Public Safety**

#### **Police Department**

Law enforcement and protection of persons and property is provided by the Police Department's 28 member enforcement team, supplemented by 12 civilian employees, including the animal control officer and harbormaster, with assistance from a number of part-time (primarily volunteer) harbor patrol officers, as well as state fish and game officers. The Police Department operates with roving patrols of typically three, occasionally four officers per shift. Average response time to an emergency dispatched call is approximately four minutes throughout town.

Police Department headquarters are located south of Route 24 at Fish Road, in a 30 year old wooden frame single story slab building that is in need of infrastructure upgrades and lacks adequate storage space for police records (which are kept in a non climate controlled metal storage unit behind the building). A previous grant enabled the department to upgrade its computer system, and in 2004, the communications system was centralized and enhanced to accommodate all emergency services -- police, fire and ambulance. In the future, the town should consider construction of a combination police/fire complex. The public safety complex should be centrally located in town on a parcel not less than seven acres to accommodate both departments' staff and parking needs.

The Police Department is committed to the concept of community policing and community involvement. It plans to continue its ongoing drug and alcohol education program in the schools, and to assist in neighborhood watch programs. Federal, state, and homeland security grants are actively sought, as is donated equipment.

#### **Fire Department**

As of 2006, the Fire Department will operate its three fire stations with a staff of 32 full-time firefighters, plus the Fire Chief and a civilian secretary. The town no longer has the assistance of volunteer firefighters.

A physical analysis of the Fire Department's facilities was completed in 1990 by Keyes Associates, with a recommendation that the town continue to monitor its facilities needs

over time. The station buildings are in need of long term repair and maintenance, and many town residents and officials feel a new fire station is needed, preferably as part of a combined police and fire complex. An ideal location would allow for the consolidation of two fire stations while ensuring that industry accepted safe response times can be met. A new station should be of sufficient size to provide adequate office space for the entire organizational structure, and adequate room for front line and reserve apparatus. There is a desire for a ladder company or a specialized fire apparatus to access the condominiums in the Villages at Mount Hope Bay and the Sakonnet Bay Manor, as well as the numerous older two-story buildings in the north end of town; presently such equipment has to be requested from Fall River or Middletown.

The Fire Department also manages the emergency rescue service, which consists of two rescue vehicles. The dispatching system put into place for the Police and Fire Departments in 2004, as well as a state-wide 911 system which identifies the locations of 911 calls, have increased both departments' efficiency in responding to emergencies. The town currently bills for rescue service.

### **Emergency Management**

Tiverton has a volunteer Emergency Management Director, appointed by the Town Administrator. One of the director's duties is to develop an emergency management plan as required by the Federal Emergency Management Act and in accordance with the Town Charter. The President of the Town Council is responsible for declaring emergencies and shall be the final authority for all emergency management decisions.

In 2005, the Town Council also adopted a hazardous mitigation plan to recommend actions and policies to minimize the economic and social impacts of natural hazards such as floods, hurricanes and severe weather (Strategy for Reducing the Risks from Natural Hazards in Tiverton, Rhode Island, 2005). Adoption of the plan increased the town's eligibility for federal hazardous mitigation grants.

## **7.2 Schools**

Tiverton's School District covers the incorporated bounds of the town. There are three operating elementary schools, Pocasset, Fort Barton and Ranger, the Tiverton Middle School and the Tiverton High School. The School Department consists of 194 teachers and 45 non-certified support staff. Although it varies somewhat from year to year, the educational system accounts for about two-thirds of the Tiverton annual budget.

### **Enrollment and Capacity**

Budgetary constraints led to the closing of Nonquit Elementary School in 2003, with those students assigned to Fort Barton and Ranger. The three remaining elementary schools have little further available capacity. The Middle School and the High School are also nearing full capacity. The information in Table 7-1 below provided by the

Superintendent's Office shows enrollment for the 2004-05 school year, and includes an estimate of percent utilization and additional capacity for each school.

**TABLE 7-1**  
**School Enrollment, Capacity and Percent Utilization, 2004-05**

School	Enrollment (6/2/05)	Approx. Capacity	Percent Utilization	Potential Growth (# of students)
Pocasset	277	330	84 %	53
Fort Barton	206	240	86 %	34
Ranger	226	250	90 %	24
Middle School	698	850	82 %	152
High School	<u>745</u>	<u>825</u>	<u>90 %</u>	<u>80</u>
Total School System	2152	2495	86 %	343

Table 7-2 shows school enrollment during three different years separated by a decade each, as well as the 2004-05 enrollment figures. It indicates that over a long period of time enrollment has been relatively stable, although in recent years while overall enrollment is declining, the number of high school students is increasing. The School Superintendent reports that enrollments over the next several years are projected to grow slowly.

**TABLE 7-2**  
**Historical School Enrollment**

	<u><b>K-4</b></u>	<u><b>5-8</b></u>	<u><b>9-12</b></u>	<u><b>Total</b></u>
<b>1981-2</b>	744	850	926	2,520
<b>1991-2</b>	811	646	578	2,035
<b>2001-2</b>	788	779	652	2,219
<b>2004-05</b>	709	698	745	2,152

Following the rejection of a bond issue in 2002 to combine the four elementary schools into a new building on a single site, the Tiverton School Committee commissioned a study of the town's elementary schools to determine the cost and advisability of rehabilitating the elementary schools, including Nonquit School in south Tiverton. The town's elementary schools were built between 1925 and 1952 and renovated in the 1950's and 1970's. They do not meet the current standards of the Rhode Island Department of Education, which require that there be 90 square feet of space for each student in the classroom and that provisions be made for special education classes, nor are they all handicapped accessible as required by the American Disabilities Act. In addition, classrooms once available for teaching have, of necessity, been assigned for computer use. The study estimated the cost of rehabilitating four elementary schools to

meet state standards at \$9 to \$10 million. The School Committee recommended instead to renovate and enlarge Fort Barton and Pocasset Schools, and to replace Ranger with a new elementary school on property north of the current high school. This required issuing a bond of approximately \$30.7 million, which was approved by the voters in the fall of 2004. Construction is expected to be completed by 2008.

In November 2002, the voters approved a \$3.75 million bond to improve the aging high school, built in 1966. Construction began in the spring of 2005, and should be completed in 2006. Improvements include expansion of the guidance area, upgrading of science labs and improvements to the soccer-football fields. The town is to be reimbursed by the State of Rhode Island for 30% of the total cost of each project.



*Tiverton's High School is improving, both physically and academically.*

### **Academic Services and Ratings**

Tiverton provides special education services through a regional collaborative program also including students from Little Compton, Portsmouth and Middletown. This allows the town to contain costs associated with providing services to students with special needs. Federal funds, which offset a portion of these costs, are allocated on a per capita basis. When ready, students are integrated into the regular classrooms.

Currently, the emphasis in the Tiverton school system is on increasing academic excellence in instruction and learning. In 2001, after a rigorous examination, Tiverton schools received accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In 2004, the Tiverton schools received strong ratings from the Rhode Island Department of Education, as follows:

**TABLE 7-3**  
**RI Department of Education Ratings, 2004-05**

<b><u>School</u></b>	<b><u>Rating</u></b>
Pocasset	Moderately Performing and Improving
Fort Barton	High Performing and Sustaining
Ranger	High Performing and Sustaining
Tiverton Middle School	High Performing and Improving
Tiverton High School	High Performing and Improving

In 2005, Tiverton High School was recognized by the Rhode Island Board of Regents as a “Commended High School” for demonstrating significant improvements in student achievements in both English Language Arts and Math, one of only eight high schools to receive this award.

### **Finance and Administration**

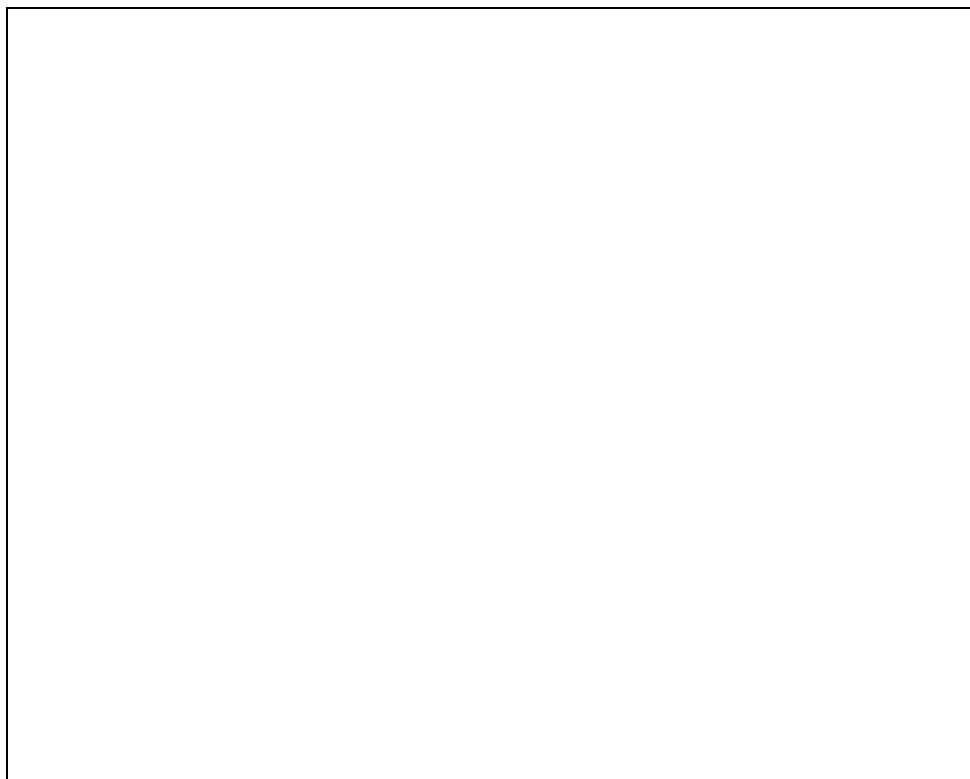
The School Committee, as vested by law, has the responsibility to determine expenditures for the school system. An annual budget is prepared, and a detailed review is undertaken by the town’s Budget Committee, before presentation at the Financial Town Meeting, held in May of each year. As required by the state, the School Committee supplies the Department of Education with a five-year capital budgeting plan. The School Department’s expenditures for the 2004-05 school year was \$9,956 per pupil, the eighth lowest of the 37 school districts in the state.

### **7.3 Library Services**

Tiverton’s library services consist of the Essex Library on Highland Road and the Union Library, located in a historic building abutting the Tiverton Four Corners historic area. Union is owned by the Union Library Association, and is rented annually to the Tiverton Library Board.

Essex and Union together provide less than 5,000 square feet of library space to a community which has grown considerably. Due to fire regulations, Essex Library is currently restricted to serving no more than 30 patrons at one time, which requires that all library programs be held in outlying facilities. In accordance with state standards which take into account present and future needs of the community, a new library would require an area of approximately 32,000 square feet. This would include public meeting space, study rooms and staff work space and room to accommodate special collections.

Although the Essex Library is deeply loved as a historic building, its location on ledge outcropping precludes expansion. A new library would cost approximately \$7.5 million. The State of Rhode Island would reimburse the town for nearly half the cost. Failure to improve the library facilities will result in the loss of state funding (\$83,000 projected for fiscal year 2006-07), as well as membership in the CLAN (Cooperating Library Automated Network) system which permits inter-library loans within the state, and access to the state's databases.

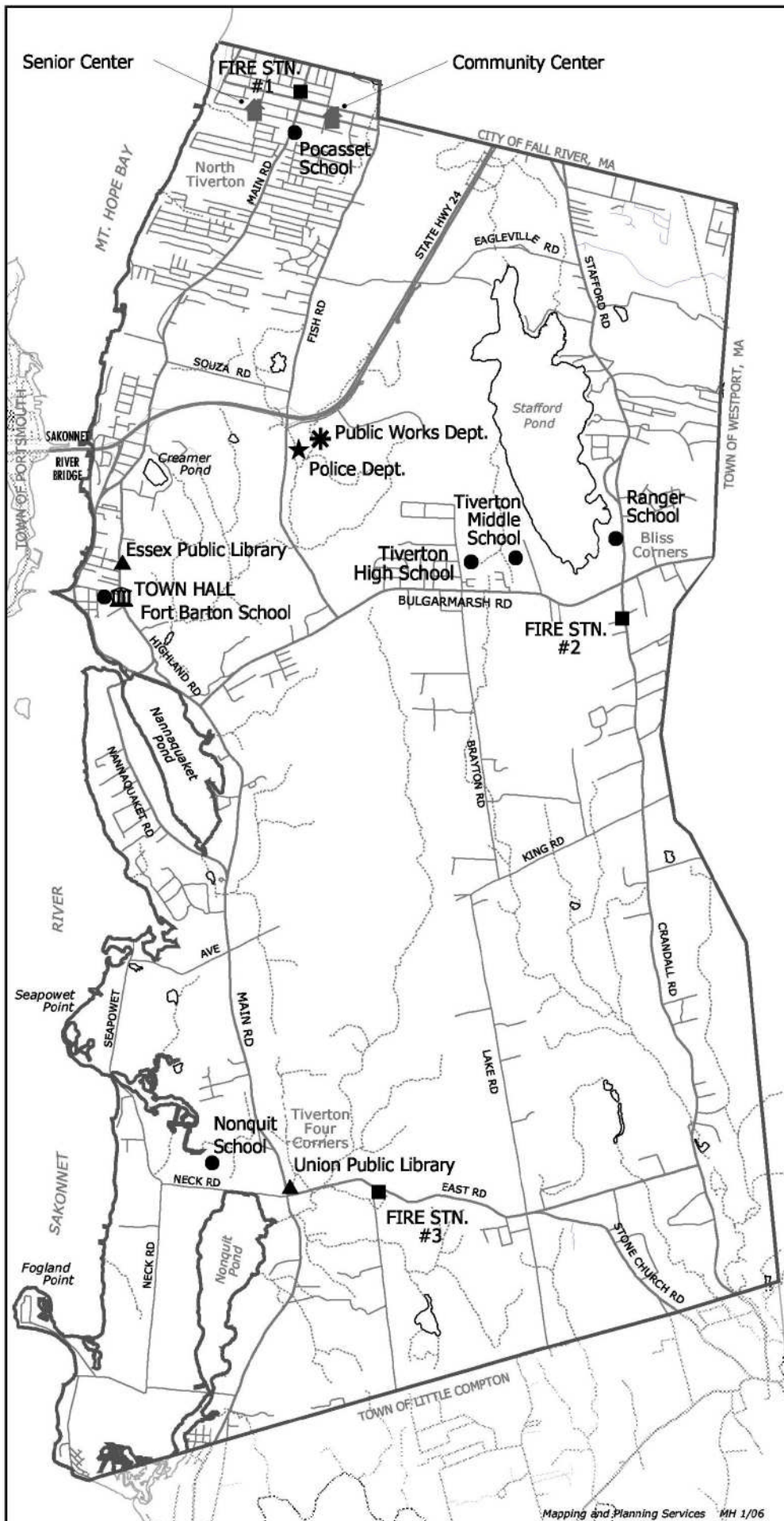


*The Essex Library on Highland Road OR Union Library at Four Corners*

#### **7.4 Facilities for Public Use**

The former Lincoln School located on Judson Street in north Tiverton serves as a community center. It serves the Recreation Commission, Harbor Commission and Wastewater Management Commission, and is used for other board meetings when the Town Hall is not available for meetings.

A senior citizens center is located on Canonicus Street in the former Barker School in north Tiverton. There is an active seniors program that includes recreation (card games, exercise classes, handicrafts groups), hot meals and senior club meetings. It is occasionally used for some public events. More programs would be added if space were available.



- TOWN HALL
- POLICE DEPT.
- FIRE STATION
- PUBLIC WORKS DEPT.
- PUBLIC SCHOOL
- LIBRARY
- COMMUNITY BUILDING

Source: RIGIS and Town of Tiverton

DRAFT



The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN



## Figure 7-1 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Tiverton Town Hall is the center for town administration, including the offices of the Town Administrator, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, Building Official, Town Treasurer, Planning Board and Town Clerk, as well as for town records storage. Although renovations in 1999 have made the Town Hall more useable, it still lacks office space, air conditioning, and climate control and fireproof storage for archival records. Many public meetings of the Town Council, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Review are crowded, often approaching the permissible occupancy of Town Hall.

In general, Tiverton lacks modern meeting space for community activities. The Amicable Congregational Church and other organizations are extremely generous in providing space for the meetings of such groups as Alcoholics Anonymous, the Community Chorus, the Tiverton Land Trust, the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Historical Society, League of Women Voters prior to town wide elections, and other groups which meet sporadically. Meeting rooms at a new library or town hall would provide alternative space.

## **7.5 Public Utilities**

### **Water Service**

Although all of south Tiverton and most sparsely populated areas in the north derive their water from wells, most homes and businesses in the more densely settled northeast portion of town are connected to public water. Two water systems serve the town, the Stone Bridge Fire District and the North Tiverton Fire District, both of which were originally established as volunteer fire fighting organizations. A third system, the Tiverton Water Authority, was acquired from the town by the North Tiverton Fire District in November 2002.

The Stone Bridge Fire District, which draws water from Stafford Pond, serves an L-shaped area extending from Stafford Pond west across Bulgarmarsh Road and north along Main Road to Souza Road. It maintains a storage capacity of 1 million gallons per day in two tanks, one with a capacity of 1 million gallons and the second with 0.5 million gallons. It serves approximately 1,070 households. Because the City of Fall River owns the water rights to Stafford Pond, Stone Bridge contracts with the city to purchase and pump water from the pond. The district also has an emergency interconnection with the Town of Portsmouth, which provides Aquidneck Island with emergency water or up to 175,000 gallons per day. Stone Bridge is proposing to either build a new state-of-the art pumping station or completely renovate the existing facility by 2009.

The North Tiverton Fire District also purchases water from the City of Fall River, drawing from North Watuppa Pond, and from the Stone Bridge Fire District for use of Stafford Pond water. Since acquiring the Tiverton Water Authority, North Tiverton Fire District has jurisdiction over the entire town, except for the area served by Stone Bridge. This district presently serves nearly 3,000 households, and would potentially serve new developments east of Stafford Pond and south of Bulgarmarsh Road. Where public water has not been extended, however, the availability of potable water is not known.

Both districts maintain their own distribution system. As required by the Rhode Island Water Resources Board, both districts update their management plans annually. Stafford Pond, and Nonquit Pond in south Tiverton, which is part of the City of Newport's water supply system and could someday provide drinking water to Tiverton residents, are both protected by means of a watershed protection overlay district (see Chapter 5).

As of 2005, the North Tiverton Fire District has completed or is undertaking a number of system improvements, which include: a new emergency pump station on Stafford Road, a 16 inch emergency interconnection along Fish Road to the existing 1 million gallon tank off Hambly Road, a new 2 million gallon storage tank, and rehabilitation of the existing pump station on State Avenue. With a cost slightly over \$3 million, the Water Resources Board and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will both contribute generously. Interim financing has been arranged with the Revolving Fund of the Rhode Island Department of Health. The expansion of water service by the North Tiverton Fire District in areas of the town other than the Stone Bridge service area is limited only by its ability to finance improvements.

Aside from upgrading the distribution and storage system, a continuing concern is the water quality of Stafford Pond. Residences along its eastern shore rely on cesspools or septic systems that eventually discharge into the pond through the groundwater or in cases of failure, through overland flow. Motor boats and seaplanes increase the risk of further contamination. In 2003 the Rhode Island Department of Health released a water assessment study of the Tiverton and Little Compton drinking water sources. The study suggested that further residential and industrial development would be expected to raise pollution threats in the Stafford Pond watershed from moderate to high levels. Although septic systems are the prime threat in this area, other non-point pollution hazards, such as fertilizers, exist.

Efforts have begun to address the maintenance and upgrading of septic systems in the watershed (see Wastewater Management below). Both the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the federal Environmental Protection Agency have been active in providing funds to mitigate agricultural and stormwater run-off. The Tiverton Conservation Commission has also published a guide for landowners in the Stafford Pond watershed.

In addition, with funding provided by the Water Resources Board, the Stone Bridge Fire District has a program of acquiring land in the Stafford Pond watershed through direct purchase or by means of conservation easements. This program, which ensures high water quality for all users, will continue as funding allows. Stone Bridge has been awarded best tasting surface water in the State of Rhode Island twice in recent years.

### **Wastewater Management**

Currently it is estimated that 94% of the homes and businesses in Tiverton rely on on-site sewage disposal systems, with an estimated 6,400 separate septic systems, half built before 1970, which implies outdated design concepts. The remaining homes and businesses are connected to a wastewater collections system operated by the town which

discharges to the City of Fall River sewage treatment facility. According to soil analyses, 80% of Tiverton's land area is problematic for septic systems; the soils are dense, slowly permeable, and have an underlying restrictive layer of "hardpan" and seasonal high water table.

South of Bulgarmarsh Road, almost all households maintain both individual wells and septic systems. Given the low housing density of the area, and land areas sufficient for adequate septic systems, even in areas of questionable drainage, sewerage expansion is not necessary. It is also unlikely that public drinking water service will be extended to this region.

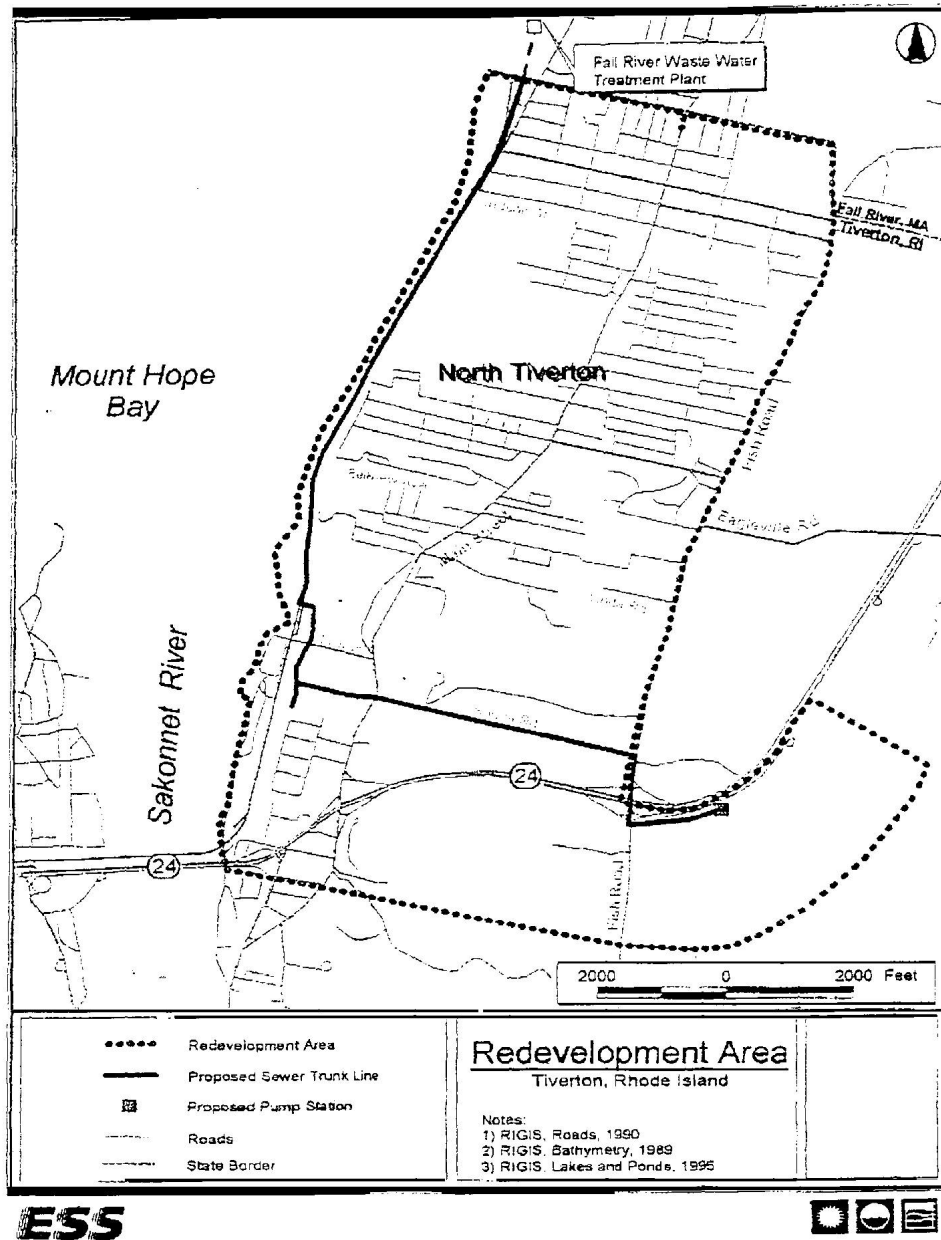
Although at the time of the original writing of the comprehensive plan there were a few sewer lines in north Tiverton connected to the sewerage system of Fall River, a number of significant connections have since been made. In 1997, the developers of Sakonnet Bay Manor, the residential facility for senior citizens, installed a 4 inch pressure line to the Fall River sewage treatment plant for its own use.

In 2000, in an agreement with the town, the developer of the Villages on Mount Hope Bay installed 2.6 miles of 12, 18 and 24 inch gravity interceptor sewer from Fall River along the state owned railroad right-of-way to the condominium development, and another 0.85 miles of force main sewer from the development to the industrial/technology park, on Industrial Way just south of Route 24 off of Fish Road. This sewer project, which also includes two pumping stations, opens up the northwest portion of town for sewer expansion and will allow extension into the industrial/technology park as needed. Financing for the project through the issuance of a tax incremental financing (TIF) bond followed the designation of the impacted area of north Tiverton as a redevelopment area. The Tiverton Redevelopment Area, shown in Figure 7-2, was identified as a blighted area also constrained by unsuitable soil conditions and inadequate utilities (amendment 00-1 to this comprehensive plan). The \$8.2 million debt is to be repaid from real estate taxes received from condominium owners at the Villages on Mount Hope Bay.

Other privately financed projects have also extended the sewer system within the town. The developer of Countryview Estates, the age restricted manufactured home community in the northeastern portion of town, installed sewers within that development, including a (third) station to pump the sewage to Fall River's Hancock Street sewer line. Other smaller extensions of the town sewer system include those that tie into the interceptor installed for the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, and those that tie directly into the Fall River system in the Stafford Road/Hancock Street area.

In addition, annual funding through the Community Development Block Grant program has provided for limited expansion of the sewers in north Tiverton in the areas of State Avenue and Shove Street. Such expansion is needed to address the many failed or failing septic systems in that area of town where homes were built on small lots and there is little land available for installing new septic systems and leach fields. Installation of sewers is part of the redevelopment of an area that qualifies for federal funding due to the high concentration of low and moderate income households, although the amount of funding provided on an annual basis (\$110,000) is relatively modest.

DRAFT FIGURE 7-2  
TIVERTON REDEVELOPMENT AREA



Sewer system extensions are presently first reviewed by the Wastewater Collections Superintendent, who recommends extensions to the Wastewater Management Commission, the Town Council appointed commission that deals generally with issues of sewers and sewage disposal. If approved by the commission, a proposed sewer extension request is submitted to the Town Council for their approval, following review and recommendation by the Planning Board.

In 2000, Tiverton received a \$35,000 grant from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) to develop an on-site wastewater management plan to address the issue of aging and failing individual sewage disposal systems. The Tiverton Conservation Commission oversaw the development of the plan and a proposed on-site wastewater ordinance. The ordinance includes a six year phase-in period for the required inspection of septic systems, and a provision for the replacement of cesspools within one year of the transfer of the ownership of a house. The Tiverton On-site Wastewater Management Plan has been adopted by the Town Council and approved by the RIDEM. As a result town residents can partake in the Community Septic System Loan Program, which provides low-cost loans to residents for the repair or upgrade of their septic systems, administered through the RI Clean Water Finance Agency. The proposed ordinance focuses first on the inspection and maintenance of septic systems in the watershed of Stafford Pond.

The current facilities plan (commonly know as the Berger Report) which addresses the sewer needs of Tiverton, recommends that all areas south of Route 24, including the Stafford Pond area, be serviced by individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS's), because sewer expansion in these areas is economically unfeasible. Concern for the quality of Stafford Pond water has brought renewed attention to this critical resource. Since the Berger Report was issued in 2000, new technologies for both individual sewage disposal systems and sewer systems warrant an updated evaluation of the options for treating wastewater generated within the Stafford Pond watershed.



*The protection of the water quality of Stafford Pond is a critical issue.*

## **Stormwater Management**

In Tiverton, swales and culverts have been the primary historical means for stormwater control. In areas which developed in more recent times through the subdivision process, systems with catch basins, connecting pipes and detention ponds contain and control stormwater run-off. New developments must meet the requirements of stringent land development regulations, and these are carefully monitored by the Public Works Director and Building Official. In general, best management practices for stormwater control are structural in nature, but the town also encourages use of innovative and advanced techniques that take advantage of natural conditions and topography.

North Tiverton's older developments have minimal drainage systems, many of which have been installed in a piecemeal manner. Most of the older systems discharge directly into receiving waters. Correcting or minimizing problems of basement flooding, septic system failure and the flooding and freezing of run-off onto town streets begins with an engineering analysis of existing conditions and potential area build-out. Based on this analysis, and availability of town funding, the selection of areas for corrective action can be done.

A Phase 2 Stormwater Management Plan has been approved by the Town Council and submitted to and reviewed by the RIDEM. The plan is to be implemented in phases according to an approved time schedule with full compliance by December 2008. A RIPDES (Rhode Island Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permit has been issued, permitting the town to drain certain stormwater into Narragansett Bay.

## **Public Works**

The Public Works Department has a staff of 12. It is charged with maintaining the town owned roads including snow removal, street sweeping, roadside mowing, catch basin cleaning and sign maintenance, as well as the town landfill operation, and the repair and maintenance of town buildings other than those used by the School Department. Municipal solid waste collection is contracted out, though the Public Works Department collects certain large metal objects with its own equipment. There is currently no charge to residents for this service, although reservations are required.

## **Solid Waste Management**

Solid waste generated by the town is disposed at the town landfill in south Tiverton, the only municipal landfill still operating in the state. It is located on 33 acres of a 125-acre parcel owned by the town. The remainder of the parcel serves as a wooded buffer area adjacent to the Town Farm Recreation Area. A mandatory recycling program has been implemented to extend the life of the landfill.

Operation of the landfill is governed by state regulations concerning fill methods, permitted types of refuse, impact controls (including leachate control) and projected life span. As required by the state, the town has retained an engineering consultant to update

its landfill management plan, and to provide quarterly monitoring of test wells surrounding the landfill. In 2005, the engineers estimated that the landfill will reach capacity in the year 2015, provided that advantage is taken of topographic conditions and permitting is obtained.

The cost to close the landfill is estimated at \$8 million. The town maintains a landfill closure account, a separate restricted account with interest earned added to the principal. As of 2005, the current balance in the account was approximately \$2.5 million. The town budget includes an annual payment of \$168,304 to cover the expense of the eventual closure of the landfill, although this amount may be increased to facilitate closing the deficit.

## **7.6 Town Administration**

Tiverton has a town council/town administrator form of government consisting of seven council members and the Town Administrator. The Town Council President is the chief executive, while the Town Administrator manages the day-to-day affairs of the town. The budget is developed by an elected Budget Committee and is voted by the electors at the Financial Town Meeting in May each year. An elected Town Treasurer oversees the fiscal concerns of the town together with an appointed (part-time) Tax Collector.

Many town functions or community areas of interest, including planning, zoning, conservation, open space and trees, recreation, sewage disposal, cemeteries, the arts, and economic development, are managed by volunteer committees.

The Tiverton Town Charter was first written in 1994 and revised in 1999 and 2004. Charter review is done every five years by an elected Charter Review Commission. Any amendments proposed by the commission must be approved by the voters. The Town Council also has the authority to recommend revisions at any time with changes approved by the voters at a special election.

In the recent past, many factors have prevented the Town Council from concentrating on long term goals. In particular, the discovery of contaminated soils in north Tiverton in 2003 could not have been anticipated, but demanded many hours of Town Council attention as well as unanticipated costs. Property line disputes, and the access from “paper roads” have also been a source of continuing time-consuming Town Council discussion.

These issues point to the need to better handle relevant information on both a town-wide and individual property basis through Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping. The GIS computerized mapping can provide layers of data for the entire town or a specific area of town, including roads, water bodies, wetlands, watershed areas, soils, utilities, zoning districts, and the boundaries of individual parcels, which then can be linked to town data such as tax assessor information.

## **7.7 Public Information**

Tiverton residents experience multiple sources of information. The town is “covered” by four newspapers, the Sakonnet Times (weekly), the Newport Daily News, the Providence Journal and the Fall River Herald News. Legal and public information notices are typically published in one or most of these papers. Videotapes of Town Council and other meetings of wide spread public interest are broadcast on a local cable network at regular intervals each week, although some sparsely populated areas of town are not covered by this local cable programming.

Tiverton has a website, which in 2005 developed into a comprehensive official website supported with town funding. Unlike the neighboring Towns of Westport and Little Compton, however, Tiverton does not publish an annual report, a listing of tax levies, nor a citizen’s guide to town services.

## **7.8 Services and Facilities Goals and Objectives**

### **Goal**

**To provide community services and facilities which respond to the public safety, educational, governmental, infrastructure and informational needs of Tiverton’s residents in a timely, efficient and cost effective manner.**

### **Objectives:**

- Define specific community facility and infrastructure needs attainable within the constraints of available resources, and assure adequate capital planning congruent with meeting these needs.
- Evaluate and improve mechanisms for efficient delivery of public safety services, including police, fire, ambulance and emergency management.
- Maintain and improve an effective educational system and library service.
- Preserve, maintain and improve reliable sources of high quality, affordable drinking water.
- Plan for a comprehensive wastewater management strategy that encompasses limited sewer expansions where needed, along with the establishment of wastewater management districts to regulate on-site sewage disposal systems.
- Improve the management, operation and administration of town services and facilities, including town offices, equipment and town owned property.
- Provide more effective mechanisms of communication between citizens and town government.

## **7.9 Services and Facilities Policies**

### **Long Term Capital Planning and Growth Management**

Perhaps at no time in its history has the Town of Tiverton faced such difficult choices in terms of the need to plan for and finance the upgrading of its aging community facilities. The need for an integrated public safety complex has been widely expressed. The School Department is undertaking physical improvements to its elementary schools (including the construction of a new school) and to its high school at a total cost of \$34.5 million, with funds provided through the issuance of two local bonds, only 30% of which will be reimbursed by the state Department of Education. Unless the library system is provided with adequate facilities, state and private funding of those services will be withdrawn. Although there is support from the state and outside foundations, the net cost to the town for a new library is estimated at \$3.5 million.

In addition, as required by the state as part of local budgeting procedures, town departments, boards and commissions all make annual funding requests based on both operating and capital needs. The almost overwhelming need has been for equipment and other capital expenses. The infrastructure of the town is inadequate for the current population, much less the increase in population represented by development attracted by relatively low land prices and open land. Development pressures escalated in 2004 and 2005, with nearly 200 potential single family homes represented by ongoing applications before the Tiverton Planning Board. Currently, engineering and planning services, and other professional services as necessary, are provided on a contractual basis. Full-time employees in these positions would better serve the needs of the town (see Chapter 5).

Finally, although the town administration has been concerned with many short-term problems (town management personnel, hazardous soil conditions, property disputes and philosophical differences among Town Council members), the State of Rhode Island, through various statutes and policies, imposes numerous requirements and unfunded mandates on the town which add responsibilities and costs which must be borne by the citizens and taxpayers. In areas such as affordable housing, educational standards, fire and police manning requirements, emergency management, stormwater control and wastewater management, state requirements have imposed new regulations without regard to the cost to the town.

**Policy 1: Develop and annually update the five year capital plan for town departments and ancillary services, including public safety, schools, library, water, public sewage and landfill management, which might be realized through taxes, bond issuance and state and federal funding, within the town's financial capabilities.**

To control residential growth, some towns in New England have imposed limits on the number of building permits issued each year so as to more efficiently plan for the municipal services needed to accommodate this growth (while allowing exemptions for developments that provide affordable housing). Other communities have instituted an

“impact fee” which provides funds for capital needs derived from the increased population. The Town of South Kingstown has adopted both a growth management ordinance and an impact fee. Although an impact fee cannot be used to address existing deficiencies in town infrastructure, it can be used to pay for that portion of new or expanded facilities, such as schools, libraries, roads and parks, that can be assigned to meeting the needs of the population resulting from additional residential development. As of 2006, the Town Council is evaluating the feasibility of and mechanism for establishing an impact fee.

**Policy 2: Implement an impact fee ordinance and consider establishing an annual cap on building permits, to be imposed if needed.**



*Residential growth increases demand for municipal services.*

## **Public Safety**

The proposal for a combined police/fire facility to serve the public safety needs of Tiverton residents is prompted by the inadequacies and long term maintenance needs of the existing buildings, as well as by the efficiency of such a facility in meeting the future needs of a growing population. Tiverton should address this issue by preparing a study that evaluates building space and equipment needs, suitable locations and estimated costs to design and construct a public safety complex.

**Policy 3: Undertake a study of combining the police department and two of the current fire stations (excepting the station in south Tiverton) into a single public safety complex in a central location.**

### **Schools, Library Services and Facilities for Public Use**

Both the school system and the libraries are essential components of the town's intellectual and civic life. However, the School Committee's assessment of future population demands appears conservative, as the town faces the addition of many new dwelling units in future years due to new residential development. Demographic data suggests that transfers of property from older residents would also have an impact on the school population.

**Policy 4: Encourage the School Committee to monitor Planning Board proceedings for "new home starts" and property transfers for school enrollment potential.**

In the warrant for the Tiverton Town Financial Meeting, capital expenditures which might have been included as a part of the normal budget are designated as "special capital expenditures" such as gymnasium repairs and roofing. As required by the state, the School Department prepares a five-year capital plan. In addition, operating expenses may be reduced, or at least performed more efficiently, by combining facilities maintenance with the municipal side of town government.

**Policy 5a: Encourage the School Committee to present an integrated, realistic and affordable annual budget, including the schedule of capital maintenance and replacement projects.**

**Policy 5b: The Tiverton School Committee and the Department of Public Works should investigate the possibility of combining necessary buildings and grounds maintenance for potential cost savings.**

The need for a new library to accommodate a community of Tiverton's size and diversity, as well as to maintain its sources of outside funding, has been well established. A town committee has worked to articulate the need for a new library and to consider potential sites and options for the new town-wide facility. Whether this occurs at a "stand-alone" site or as part of a larger mixed use or municipal center development, the new library must be a priority for the town.

**Policy 6: Support the establishment of a new library with adequate facilities for current and future use.**

Community services are housed in obsolescent, inconvenient facilities. The "Town Hall Annex" as the Judson Street facility is sometimes referred to, is not generally considered "user friendly". Similarly, the Senior Center lacks the space and facilities to meet the full demand of the services it provides. Both would require substantial capital improvements to meet the demands for modern meeting and activity space.

As the School Department develops and consolidates its facilities, buildings no longer used as schools can be converted to other community uses. For example, the old Nonquit

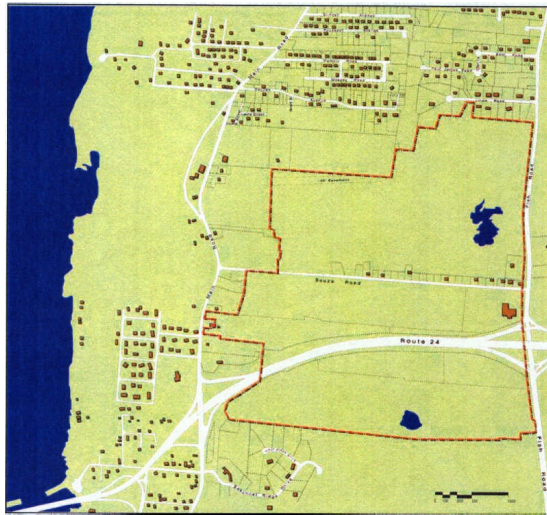
School is now used to house a Headstart Program. In general, all town owned buildings should be evaluated for alternative uses before being sold or otherwise disposed of. In particular, both south Tiverton and the Bliss Four Corners area are without public facilities for neighborhood and cultural activities.

**Policy 7: Evaluate options for providing additional public meeting space in Tiverton, particularly for seniors and youth groups, and consider the best alternative use of all inactive school and other town buildings.**

### **Development of a Municipal Center**

A town center planning study undertaken in 2004 promoted the concept of a mixed-use village center as a way to provide retail services, affordable housing and a central location for municipal buildings (see Chapter 10). Many of the long-term facilities needs of the town could be included in such a village or municipal center. Facilities such as a public safety building, a library, a new town hall and/or community center would provide the public component and contribute to the daily activity necessary to make such a concept work.

**Policy 8: Consider options for the development of a modern municipal center, including the public safety complex, library, town governance and public meeting space.**



*The study area for a new Tiverton Town Center.*

### **Water Services**

Water management plans for each of the two water supply districts, Stone Bridge and North Tiverton, are required by the state, and each has prepared a plan. These plans are required to be consistent with the Comprehensive Community Plan. However, a plan addressing water supply for the entire municipality has yet to be developed.

**Policy 9: Encourage the Stone Bridge and North Tiverton Fire Districts to present a single, town wide management plan, and require them to work in conjunction with the Planning Board in determining a measured expansion of public water so as to moderate development pressure in the town.**

### **Wastewater Management**

Currently the large majority of homes and businesses in Tiverton rely upon individual sewerage disposal systems (ISDS), which, when properly designed, installed and maintained, are effective and efficient for wastewater treatment. In sparsely developed areas, on-site systems are more cost effective than sewers. Keeping most areas of Tiverton unsewered will also help protect the rural character of the town by limiting development potential. However, many existing individual systems are quite old and are substandard due to the technology used and/or operate with physical limitations due to the presence of ledge, high ground water or soils of low permeability. The On-Site Wastewater Management Plan, completed in 2004, and the On-Site Wastewater Management Ordinance, under consideration in 2006, are the first steps toward addressing the issue of substandard or improperly maintained septic systems, particularly in the watershed of Stafford Pond, the town's major public drinking water supply. The ordinance will provide for the orderly inspection and maintenance of existing ISDS and the replacement of failing systems.

**Policy 10 Implement the On-Site Wastewater Management Ordinance on a town-wide basis so as to protect ground and surface water at a reasonable cost to property owners.**

The Wastewater Management Commission, which participated in the development of the on-site wastewater management plan and ordinance, will take on more responsibility with the implementation of the requirements of the ordinance. As described in the 1999 version of the Town Charter, the commission (formerly the Sewer Commission) shall administer that portion of the Town Code entitled "Sewers and Sewage Disposal". However, with the growth of Tiverton and the complexities of managing both sewer expansion, which involves contractual interaction with the City of Fall River, and the implementation of the wastewater management plan, the town would be best served by the replacement of the volunteer commission with a town department. The commission would then serve in an advisory capacity to the appropriate town staff.

**Policy 11: Amend the Town Charter to transfer the regulatory power of the Wastewater Management Commission to the Department of Public Works, and provide for a regular, perhaps part time, employee to oversee septic system requirements.**

In late 2004 the Town Council placed a restriction on the extension and "hookup" of sewers without the council's explicit approval. Tiverton's contract with the City of Fall River limits the total flow from the town into the city's treatment system to a maximum of 2 million gallons per day. Priority for sewer expansion is to be given to those areas in

the north end characterized by failing septic systems. Additional expansion should be allowed only following an analysis of sewer capacity and an understanding of the likely impact of such expansion on development potential and town character.

**Policy 12**     **Include in the Sewers and Sewage Disposal Ordinance sufficient controls on sewer expansion so that residential growth is managed in accordance with the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan, and priority is given to those areas where on-site disposal is inadequate or failing, while ensuring that the total maximum flow capacity is not exceeded.**

Much of the disquiet with which the sewer expansion proposals have been viewed has been the lack of substantiation for cost incurred by both the town and property owners. A complete financial plan, showing costs and financing requirements is needed.

**Policy 13:**     **Require that any sewer expansion be supported by a complete financial plan, including costs and expenses, methods of financing improvements, and fees chargeable to individual property owners.**

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**THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVE TEXT AND POLICIES ARE SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION:**

**Wastewater Management**

Currently the large majority of homes and businesses in Tiverton rely upon individual sewerage disposal systems (ISDS). Many of these are quite old and substandard due to the technology that was used when they were installed. These substandard ISDS's contribute pollution to the town's groundwater and in some cases surface water. In the more urban areas of town, high ground water, ledge, soils with low permeability and small lot sizes make the installation of sewers the preferable alternative to eliminate this source of pollution. It is therefore imperative to secure financing and to begin construction of the sewer system in accordance with the approved facilities plan as soon as possible.

**Policy 10:**     **The Wastewater Management Commission shall have the responsibility for securing sources of funds, including but not limited to tax increment financing (TIF), to support the construction and expansion of the public sewer system in those areas identified by the approved facilities plan as it may be amended from time to time.**

In the more rural areas of town, mainly south of Route 24, larger lot sizes provide residents more opportunity to upgrade failed or outdated ISDS's with state-of-the-art systems that will effectively treat their wastewater. In these areas of town, properly designed and maintained ISDS's are more cost effective than sewers and will effectively treat the wastewater generated from the local residents and businesses. The On-Site Wastewater Management Plan, completed in 2004, and the proposed On-Site Wastewater Management Ordinance are the first steps toward addressing the issue of substandard or improperly maintained septic systems, particularly in the watershed of

Stafford Pond, the town's major public drinking water supply. The proposed ordinance will provide for the orderly inspection and maintenance of existing ISDS and the replacement of failing systems.

**Policy 11: Implement the On-Site Wastewater Management Ordinance so as to protect ground and surface water at a reasonable cost to property owners.**

The Wastewater Management Commission, which participated in the development of the On-Site Wastewater Management Plan and Ordinance, will take on more responsibility with the implementation of the requirements of the ordinance. As described in the 1999 version of the Town Charter, the commission (formerly the Sewer Commission) shall administer that portion of the Town Code entitled "Sewers and Sewage Disposal". In October 2004, the town hired a Wastewater Collections Superintendent to oversee the day-to-day operations of the town's sewer collections system. The superintendent reports to the Director of Public Works and is responsible for maintenance of the town's wastewater collection system, including all of its pumping stations. The superintendent also oversees all construction of new sewers and residential service tie-ins and interacts with the City of Fall River, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and others on matters regarding wastewater. This person provides the Wastewater Management Commission with the expertise to formulate long range plans for presentation to the Town Council for adoption. The position is totally financed by those town residents who currently have sewers. As the superintendent takes on more responsibilities related to the On Site Wastewater Management Plan, part of the cost of the position should be transferred to general town operations.

The Wastewater Management Commission serves a vital role in providing the overall planning and management of the wastewater generated in town. In order to effectively address the challenges of town wide wastewater management over the next several years, commissioners must be fully aware of the day to day challenges faced by the Wastewater Collections Superintendent. The current relationship between the commission and the superintendent provides this operational knowledge so critical as we look forward to expanding the sewer system and implementing the On Site Wastewater Management Plan.

**Policy 12: The Wastewater Management Commission shall administer that portion of the town code entitled Sewers and Sewage Disposal as set forth by the present Town Charter.**

A detailed Wastewater Facilities Plan for Tiverton was conducted by Camp Dresser & McKee Engineers and approved by the EPA in October 1976. In January 2000, the Berger Group completed a Facilities Plan Update, which was approved by RIDEM. This document is the guideline currently used by the town for treating all wastewater generated within the town. Now that the town is seriously considering implementing the On Site Wastewater Ordinance and beginning the build-out of the planned sewer system, this document needs to be updated. Furthermore, if the town intends to utilize financing alternatives that are currently available from the state, the Department of Environmental Management requires that the document be updated.

A facilities plan update will identify those areas in town that require sewers and those areas that can be serviced by individual sewage disposal systems. It could also

incorporate additional studies, such as an engineering study to determine appropriate on-site treatment systems in the Stafford Pond Watershed, in the overall planning of wastewater treatment within the town.

**Policy 13      Provide funding to enable the town's existing Wastewater Facilities Plan to be updated and an engineering study of the Stafford Pond watershed to be conducted.**

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### **Town Administration**

Adoption of a GIS mapping system would provide a valuable planning tool and bring Tiverton up-to-date in terms of current technology for managing and presenting data on the town's physical characteristics, infrastructure and regulatory mechanisms.

**Policy 14      Provide funding to establish and implement town-wide GIS mapping system to serve the town's planning, administrative and public service needs.**

### **Public Information**

It is difficult to assess whether more information would increase citizen interest in town affairs. Certainly specific issues are known to "pack" Town Hall during Town Council meetings and workshops. Particular neighborhood concerns have resulted in increased attendance. With the establishment of an official website, citizens now have a central source of information (other than the crowded Town Hall bulletin board) regarding Town Council and committee meetings, and other meetings of public interest. However, the town could still be served by an annual publication of community interest.

**Policy 15:      In addition to the town website, consider providing other forms of information dissemination, such as an annual citizens guide to town services and regulations.**



*Tiverton's historic town hall serves as a municipal center.*

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## **8.0 CIRCULATION** (*italics represent changes to the current plan*)

*This chapter of the Comprehensive Community Plan addresses all modes of transportation including the town roadway system, public transit programs, and existing and proposed pedestrian and bicycle routes within the town. It is essential to provide safe and efficient circulation while maintaining the town's small town and rural qualities and scenic values. Future transportation projects, initiatives and policies are also addressed.*

### **8.1 Roadway System**

*The roadway system classifies a road or street according to the function it serves or is intended to serve. A roadway can serve two separate functions: provide for through traffic and travel mobility, the principal function of expressways and arterials; and provide access to adjacent land, the major function of local or residential streets and to some degree collector routes.*

Tiverton uses a system of three highway classifications for rural and urban areas, *as follows:*

**Arterial:** A major street that serves as an avenue for the circulation of traffic onto, out of, or around a municipality and which carries high volumes of traffic.

**Collector:** A street whose principal function is to carry traffic between local streets and arterial streets, but that may also provide direct access to abutting properties.

**Local:** A street whose primary function is to provide access to abutting properties.

*Figure 8-1 shows the existing functional classification of the roadways in Tiverton.*

### **Conflicts and Accident Data**

*Conflicts in functional classification are becoming increasingly evident in Tiverton due to the growth of housing subdivisions, drive-through windows and other elements of suburban sprawl. A number of areas are especially problematical, including the following:*

- \* Main Road from Riverside Drive to Narragansett Avenue*
- \* Main Road from Pocasset Hill Cemetery to Russell Drive*
- \* Bliss Four Corners at the intersection of Stafford Road and Bulgarmarsh Road*
- \* Canning Boulevard from the Fall River border to Stafford Road at Hurst Lane*

The Tiverton Police Department maintains accident records for roadways and streets in the town. *Those streets reporting ten or more accidents in 2004 are indicated in the table below.*

**TABLE 8-1**  
**Traffic Accidents by Roadway, 2004**

<u>Roadway</u>	<u>Accidents</u>
Main Road	151
Route 24	50
Stafford Road	46
Bulgarmarsh Road	32
Fish Road	31
Crandall Road	22
Eagleville Road	7
East Road	6

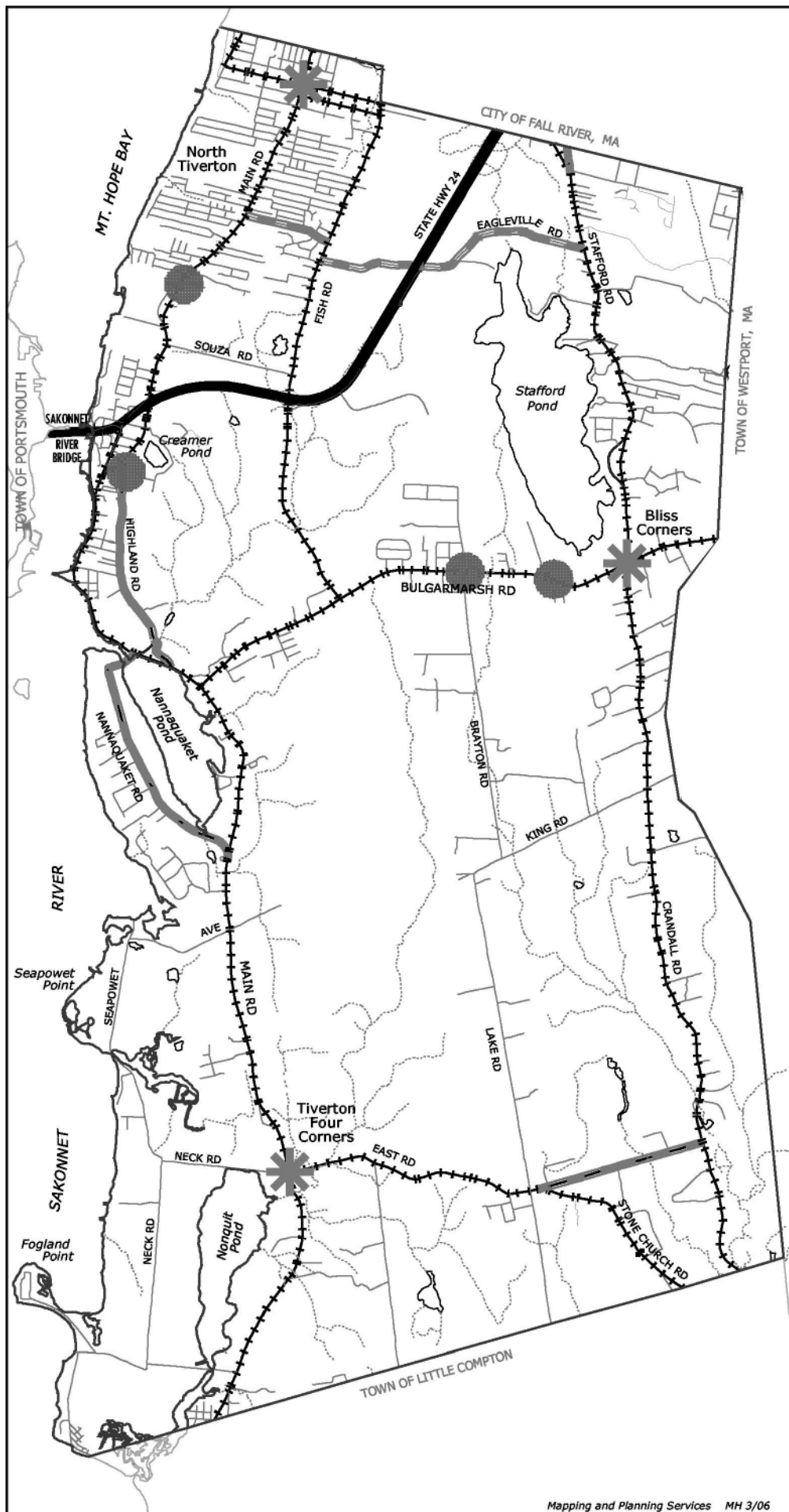
The Police Chief reports that the majority of these accidents were due to speeding and roadway alignment difficulties, although the relatively high number of accidents on Main Road resulted from the number of intersections, driveways and other obstacles along that route. *A breakdown of the locations of accidents along Main Road for the year 2004 is as follows:*

**TABLE 8-2**  
**Traffic Accidents along Main Road, 2004**

<u>Main Road Section</u>	<u>Accidents</u>
State line to Judson Street	21
Judson Street to Warren Ave	26
Warren Ave to Route 24	33
Route 24 to Central Ave	13
Central Ave to Bridgeport	24
Bridgeport to Lafayette Road	19
Lafayette Road to Pond Bridge	15
Pond Bridge to Little Compton	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	151

## **Maintenance**

Tiverton shares maintenance responsibilities for the roadways in town with the state Department of Transportation. The state lists 182 miles of roadway in Tiverton, of which 33 miles are state owned and maintained. The remainders are maintained by the Tiverton Department of Public Works which employs 10 people. Snowplowing is contracted separately *on major roadways in town.*



FHWA Functional Classification 2005-2105

- Urban Principal Arterial
- Urban Minor Arterial
- Urban Collector
- Urban Non Classified

Signalized Intersection

Caution Signal

Source: RIGIS/RIDOT Roads  
(2005-2015 Functional  
Classification based on  
Federal Highway HPMS values).

DRAFT



0 1 Mile

The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

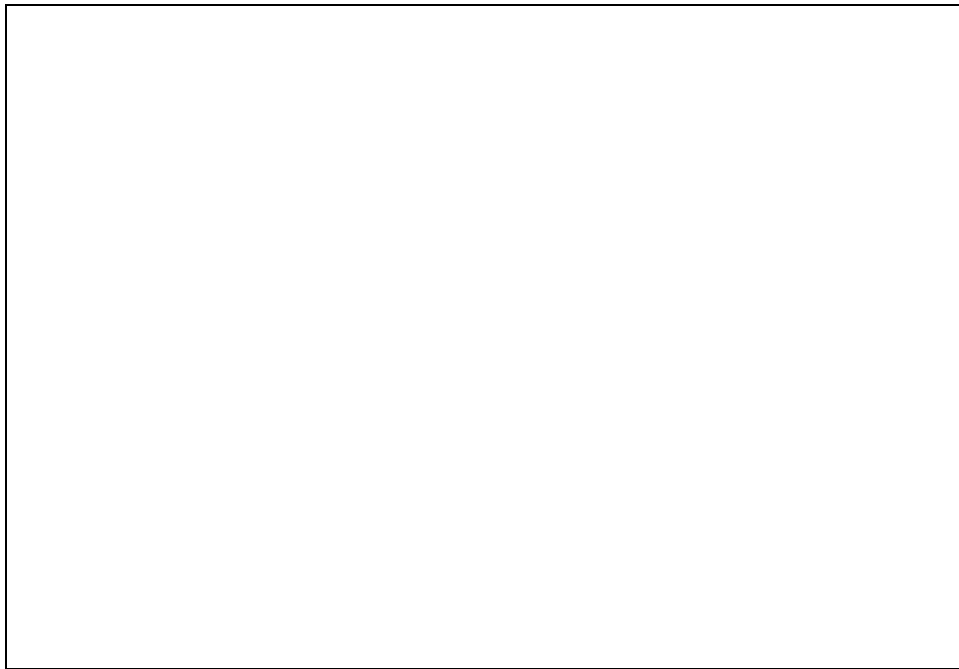
TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE  
COMMUNITY PLAN

**Figure 8-1**  
**ROAD FUNCTIONAL**  
**CLASSIFICATION**  
**(2005-2015)**



The Department of Public Works reports that the major maintenance problems involve paving conditions in poor soil areas that cause roadways to buckle. *Recent severe winters highlighted another maintenance issue. High ground water levels cause water to seep into basements in certain areas of town. Homeowners are forced to pump water out of their basements and onto their street on a regular basis. During freezing temperatures this causes a traffic hazard. The Department of Public Works is working with homeowners to tie pumped water directly into storm water drains to alleviate water and ice on street surfaces.*

*Tiverton has also been historically plagued by the ambiguous legal status of many streets which have never been formally accepted as town streets, yet receive varying degrees of town services. In other cases, private streets have been petitioned for takeover by the town but have not been built or maintained to town standards. This is an on-going source of dispute for both the Planning Board and the Town Council.*



*Main Road is Tiverton's busiest street*

## **8.2 Public Transit and Rail Service**

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) operates commuter buses in the morning and evening that link Little Compton and Tiverton with Newport and Providence, through Bristol, Warren, and Barrington. Tiverton ridership along this route is low.

The RI Department of Transportation operates a park and ride facility at the intersection of Route 24 and Fish Road that has a design capacity for 92 cars.

*RIPTA also operates a low-cost “FlexService” minivan with both scheduled service and individual taxi service anywhere in the service area that includes Tiverton and parts of Portsmouth and Bristol. The FlexService also links to Fall River public transportation. Minibus taxi service by the Rhode Island Disabled and Elderly Program (RIDE) is also available to the disabled and elderly population of Tiverton for transport to medical facilities, senior centers and retail establishments. Both the FlexService and RIDE programs offer wheelchair accessible vans.*

*The Newport and Old Colony railway line originally ran from Fall River down to Newport on the west side of north Tiverton along Mount Hope Bay, over the Sakonnet River to Portsmouth, and along the west side of Aquidneck Island to downtown Newport. The line is currently inactive and the Sakonnet River swing bridge linking Tiverton and Portsmouth is scheduled to be removed. The right-of-way is owned by the RI Department of Transportation, although the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company has freight rights that can be exercised at any time subject to rail repairs. However, both commuter rail service and a bicycle path are feasible and desirable future uses for this corridor.*

*Long term plans by the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA) include the New Bedford - Fall River Commuter Rail Extension, referred to as the South Coast commuter rail line. This project, which is in the preliminary design and environmental permitting stages, will extend the existing Stoughton Line from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River and will include construction of new track, bridges, grade crossings and eight new commuter rail stations. It will provide 16 daily roundtrips (8 from each city) and serve a total of 4,280 new daily inbound riders. Construction is not expected to be complete until at least 2010, but the ability to commute to Boston from nearby Fall River will have an impact on the growth potential for Tiverton and job opportunities for its residents.*



*The Newport and Old Colony Railroad right-of-way has future transportation potential*

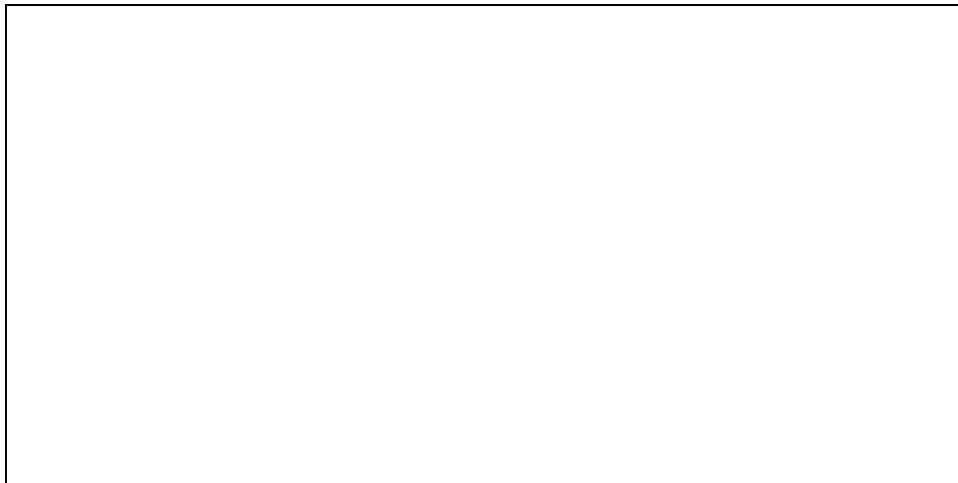
### **8.3 Sakonnet River Bridge**

*The Sakonnet River Bridge carries nearly 40,000 cars per day on RI Route 24 between Portsmouth and Tiverton. The existing bridge is in deteriorating surface condition, is structurally deficient and does not meet shoulder width or seismic protection requirements. Five alternatives for rehabilitation or replacement were studied by RI Department of Transportation, and in April 2003 a final environmental report was approved which selected the option of a replacement bridge on the southerly most alignment as the one having the least environmental impacts. Construction of the new bridge is expected to begin in 2007 and take three years to complete. It will feature two lanes in each direction with a combined bike and pedestrian path on the north side separated from vehicular traffic by safety rails. It will not include bimodal capacity for rail transit.*

### **8.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation**

There are sidewalks only along the short section of Main Road from Fall River to the Pocasset School, and in a few other limited areas, such as along Main Road in the Stone Bridge area. There are no designated bike routes or trails in the town. The RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has prepared a Statewide Bicycle System Plan with the goal of linking bicycle tolerant roadways and bike paths as part of an integrated network serving the entire state.

*In 2002, the town received a grant from RIDOT for the planning and implementation of a pedestrian and bike route along a scenic section of Main Road from the Stone Bridge area north to Riverside Drive. Aspects of the project include streetscape enhancements and other physical improvements to reduce traffic speeds, improve parking and accommodate pedestrians, as well as opening up view corridors so that residents and visitors alike may enjoy the water views and safely and efficiently patronize small retail shops and restaurants.*



*The Stone Bridge area has possibilities for improved traffic flow, pedestrian safety and bicycle links*

*An earlier study (1997) funded by RIDOT focused on the feasibility of an on-road bike route through southern Tiverton. The so-named Sakonnet River Bikeway would connect the Town Hall with the waterfront at Stone Bridge and follow along scenic roadways including Nanaquaket Road, Seapowet Avenue and Puncateest Neck Road to the border with Little Compton. While this bikeway was not pursued further by the town, many of the roadways remain very suitable for bicycling for both recreation and travel purposes, and are delineated as such on the current version of the state bike map ("A Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State"). The possibility also remains that Tiverton could be part of a larger bicycle network that involves linking the Stone Bridge area with a bike route along the rail corridor described above, which could also eventually link to bikeways in both the East Bay area and Aquidneck Island.*

## **85 Circulation Goal and Objectives**

### **Goal**

***Provide for the safe and efficient management of automobile traffic while encouraging alternative forms of circulation that complement the community's special character and quality of place.***

### **Objectives**

- *Implement design guidelines that assure safe and efficient access and egress to commercial establishments and housing subdivisions.*
- *Inventory town rights of way and platted, unimproved streets and roads, and determine their legal status.*
- *Encourage public transportation usage, including RIPTA commuter bus service.*
- *Encourage the provision of alternative forms of circulation, including bicycle, pedestrian and water transportation.*

## **8.6 Circulation Policies**

### ***Roadway System***

To implement the functional classification, the town should limit driveways along arterials and collectors to the extent that they allow reasonable use of adjacent property. Shared driveways or the development of internal circulation systems should be encouraged. Subdivision and site plan reviews should reflect these policies. Where possible, regional or through traffic should be directed to arterials, not collectors. *Traffic signals are inconsistent with the functioning and character of community's roadways and should be avoided wherever possible, consistent with safety considerations.*

*In addition, Tiverton's safe and efficient transportation systems can be maintained and enhanced without sacrificing the community's attractive appearance. Roadways should be both functional and aesthetically pleasing to maintain quality of place. Many town roadways continue to reward motorists with scenic landscapes and water views, including numerous reminders of the town's maritime and agricultural history and culture. However, recent commercial and housing development adjacent to major transportation corridors threatens functionality and appearance. Examples of unsightly roadside development include drive-through windows, sprawling commercial parking lots with inadequate landscaping, oversized signage and excessive lighting. Unsightly sprawl also poses a safety hazard by attracting increased traffic volume that burdens existing roadways.*

**Policy 1:** *Continue to review and update site plan review provisions for commercial development and residential subdivision regulations as they pertain to circulation and access. Review street design and construction standards, off-street parking requirements and other design standards.*

*Drive-through windows contribute to tailpipe air pollution and can present a safety hazard to adjoining roadways. The Conservation Commission's Litter Abatement Committee also reports that the largest single source of roadside litter comes from the town's drive-through windows. These windows pose safety hazards because motorists queue-up on public roads at peak traffic periods. Moreover, drive-through windows detract from the community's rural and scenic quality.*

**Policy 2:** *Limit the construction of additional drive-through windows.*

Title 45 Section 23.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws empowers communities to prepare and adopt an official map that identifies and shows the location of public streets and proposed streets. The law provides a procedure for the preparation of an official map. *Such an official street map can guide the town in allocating the services and resources of the Public Works Department related to road maintenance.*

**Policy 3:** *Conduct a comprehensive audit to determine legal status of streets in town, and maintain an updated "official street map" in Town Hall. This inventory should include platted, unimproved streets and roads.*

### ***Commuter Transportation***

Currently, RIPTA provides the only source of *commuter* transportation in the town. Despite low ridership, it is an essential service for those who use it. Greater publicity of routes, publication of timetables and promotion is essential if ridership is to be increased. Marketing and service planning is important, despite the low density of development, high levels of auto ownership and short work trips which make it difficult to serve this area with public transit.

A resident survey of usage would be useful to determine adjustments in schedules that would make this service more convenient. Place of work data from the 2000 Census would be particularly useful to evaluate this service.

**Policy 4:** **Encourage increased use of RIPTA commuter services by evaluating and adjusting schedules to serve residents, and promote the availability of the services through greater publicity.**

#### **Alternative Forms of Circulation**

The town should take steps to make itself amenable to alternative forms of circulation, in particular pedestrians and bicycles. Sidewalks should be provided, particularly within commercial areas in Tiverton Four Corners, north Tiverton and at Bliss Four Corners. New sidewalks provided should include a planted strip which separates it from the street. Lower speeds should be enforced on streets with sidewalks or bikeways. Neckdowns, or narrowed pavements at intersections such as Bliss Four Corners and Tiverton Four Corners would encourage, rather than intimidate pedestrians.

The bicycle is a viable alternative to the automobile for many short trips. A system of bicycle routes should be identified which link key areas in the community such as schools, town facilities, shopping areas and major subdivisions. Two types of bicycle routes should be considered.

**Bikeways:** *A roadway designated for bicycle use by either pavement markings defining a lane for bicycles or a vertical sign indicating a shared right-of-way.*

**Bike Paths:** *A separate right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and non-motorized vehicles.*

**Policy 5:** **Develop a system of pedestrian and bike routes compatible with the safe use of the existing road system.**

The right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony railroad is a special resource that should be protected for future use. *RIDOT has completed a study of the rail corridor and has decided to maintain the right-of-way while encouraging multiple uses in the future. Such uses include commuter rail, excursion trains, a bike path and pedestrian use. A recent examination of rail right-of-way use options on Aquidneck Island calls for further study of the feasibility of restored rail service to the island. This option is enhanced by the prospect of commuter rail service between Boston and Fall River. A pedestrian and bike trail can exist alongside of the rail line. The town, along with its neighbors on Aquidneck Island, should consider all options and include its recommendations in upcoming Transportation Improvement Programs.*

**Policy 6:** **Preserve the public right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railway and evaluate the use of the line as part of a regional transportation plan, including pedestrian and bicycle access.**

## **Transportation Improvement Program**

*The statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a biennial document developed by the Transportation Advisory Committee and adopted by the State Planning Council. It directs federal transportation dollars to individual projects and programs that are implemented chiefly through RIDOT and RIPTA. Local pedestrian, bicycle and roadway improvements are intended to be coordinated with this program.*

*Recent TIP projects scheduled for funding in the Town of Tiverton include, of course, the replacement of the Sakonnet River Bridge as well as two projects under the Transportation Enhancement Program, a special category of funding that focuses on non-traditional transportation projects that relate to community character and the natural environment. These projects include the improvements to Main Road in the Stone Bridge area, described above, as well as acquisition of additional open space in the Weetamoo Woods area.*

**Policy 7:**      **Maintain and update local priorities for local pedestrian, bicycle and roadway improvements based on the adopted Transportation Improvement Program. These priorities should be submitted for consideration in the state's biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).**



*Tiverton has many beautiful roadways suitable for bicycling*

## **9.0 OPEN SPACE, COASTAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION**

*Note: This chapter is mostly rewritten*

This chapter of the Comprehensive Community Plan contains a description of Tiverton's open space and conservation areas, and its recreational facilities, including coastal features. Opportunities for further protection and enhancement of these areas are proposed.

### **9.1 Existing Resources**

Rhode Island and the New England region have led the nation in appreciating the value of open space and recreational resources. Since 1985, Rhode Island voters have approved many millions to be spent on the acquisition of open space and the development of recreational facilities, and Tiverton has used state matching funds for both purposes: to acquire Weetamoo Woods and to develop a new soccer field and baseball-softball field at the Town Farm. A proactive Open Space Commission works alongside the Tiverton Land Trust to tap other funding sources to acquire or protect important open space. The Land Trust has already saved 229 acres that were proposed for actual development. Both public and private interests must continue to work together to preserve open space in a carefully thought out strategy that balances open space preservation with other policy goals of the town, such as the need for housing, economic opportunity and active recreation facilities.

In 1989, the Recreation Committee prepared the Tiverton Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan, which is incorporated herein by reference. In the plan, the town accepts responsibility for providing sufficient recreation opportunities for all of its citizens. It places a priority on improving existing facilities and pursuing preservation particularly in the coastal region. The plan assisted in obtaining grants from the RI Department of Environmental Management for the development of the new recreational fields at the Town Farm, as well as purchase of the parcels that make up Weetamoo Woods. With many successful open space acquisitions and recreational developments completed, and given the rapidly changing town demographics, a review of the Tiverton Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan is necessary for planning future needs.

Several groups provide recreation programs, including the Little League and the Boy Scouts. The town employs a Recreation Coordinator to assist the Recreation Commission to expand its year round programs. The coordinator serves as liaison between public agencies and private groups for the utilization of the town's facilities.

Table 9-1 contains a listing of Tiverton's open space, conservation and recreational resources, which are also delineated in corresponding Figure 9-1. Most of the open space is in the southern portion of town, with the largest parcels consisting of Pardon Gray Preserve/Weetamoo Woods, Eight Rod Management Area and Seapowet Marsh. Most of the active recreational areas are associated with the schools. The need for open space and recreational resources continues to be greatest in north Tiverton, which has the highest population density but the least amount of available space.

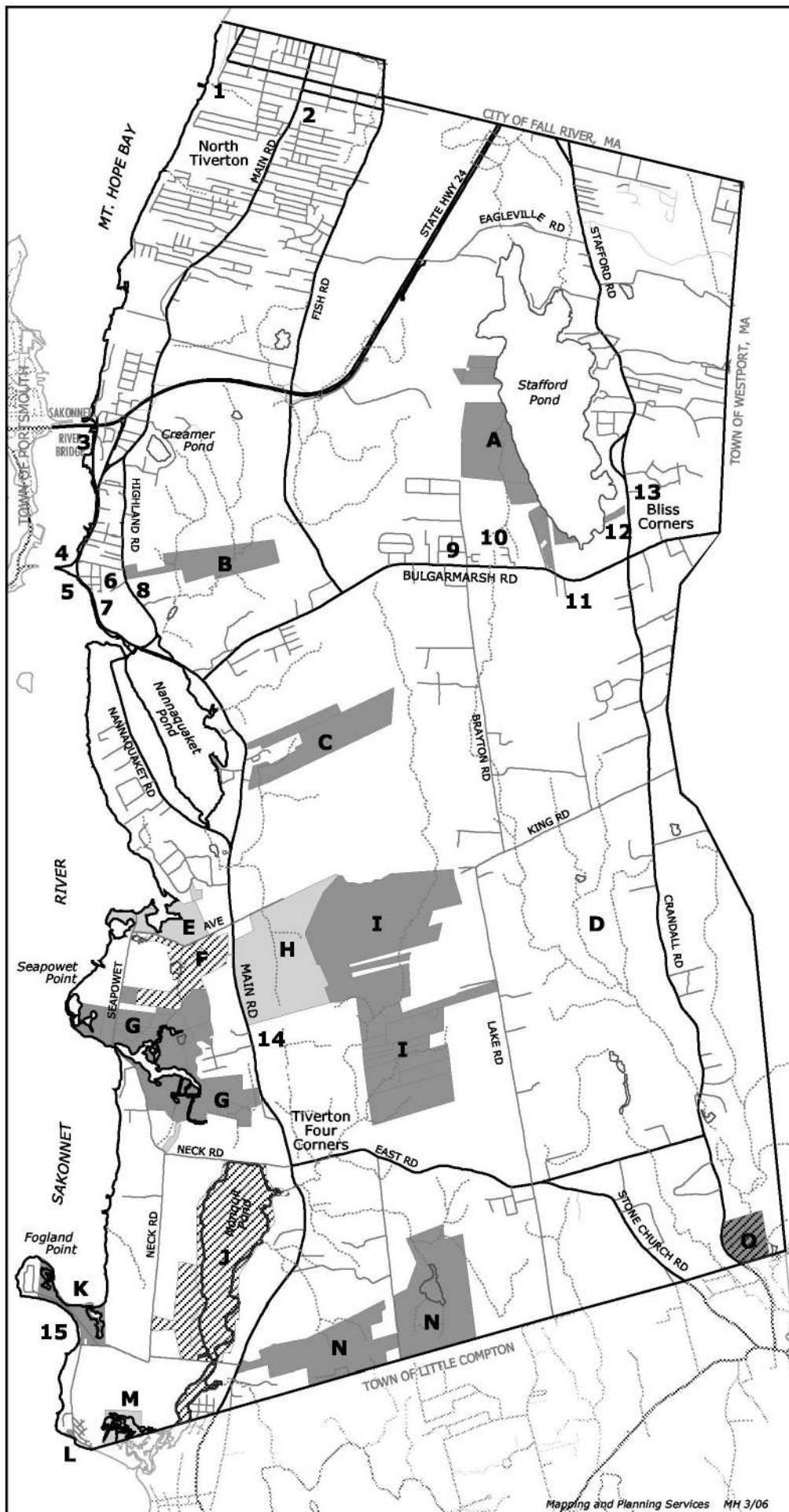
**TABLE 9-1**  
**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION RESOURCES**  
*(Updated 2006 – Draft)*

<b>Map</b>	<b><u>Open Space and Conservation Areas</u></b>	<b><u>Acreage</u></b>	<b><u>Jurisdiction</u></b>
A	Stone Bridge Fire District Lots		Water Authority
B	Fort Barton Woods		Town
C	Helger/Sanford Parcels		Town
D	Lebreux Woods		Conservation Easement*
E	Emile Ruecker Wildlife Refuge		Audubon Society of RI
F	Hathaway Farm		Conservation Easement*
G	Seapowet Marsh Wildlife Refuge		RI DEM
H	Pardon Gray Preserve		Tiverton Land Trust
I	Weetamoo Woods		Town
J	Nonquit Pond Parcels		Newport Water District & Conservation Easements*
K	Fogland Beach Conservation Area		Town
L	Chaves Lot		Town
M	Fogland Marsh		Nature Conservancy
N	Eight Rod Management Area		RI DEM
O	Crandall Road Lot		Development Rights
	<b><u>Parks and Recreation Resources</u></b>	<b><u>Acreage</u></b>	<b><u>Facilities</u></b>
1	Bay Street Recreational Area	2.0 acres	2 playing fields, 2 tables, tot lot
2	Pocasset School	8.0 acres	3 playing fields, 4 tennis courts, tot lot
3	Sakonnet Bridge Access**	0.1 acres	boat ramp
4	Stone Bridge Pier	0.5 acres	park
5	Grinnell's Beach	2.5 acres	5 tables
6	Fort Barton Elementary School	3.5 acres	1 playing field, tot lot
7	Little League Field	1.0 acres	1 playing field
8	Fort Barton	3.0 acres	park
9	Bulgarmarsh Grove	1.0 acres	basketball courts, skate park
10	High School and Middle School	58.0 acres	4 playing fields
11	Bulgarmarsh Recreation Area	11.4 acres	4 playing fields, 4 tennis courts, table
12	Stafford Pond Fishing Access**	0.4 acres	1 boat ramp
13	Ranger School	5.0 acres	1 playing field
14	Town Farm Recreation Area	3.0 acres	2 playing fields, soccer field, 4 tennis courts, playground, table, tot lot
15	Fogland Beach	45.0 acres	8 tables, tot lot

\* Private properties whose development rights have been relinquished – no public access

\*\* State Owned

Source: Ocean State Outdoors; RI Outdoor Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Inventory, June 1989. Tiverton Steering Committee, 1991. *Updated 2006.*



- PUBLIC OPEN SPACE  
Town, Water Districts, RI DEM
- PRIVATE OPEN SPACE  
Tiverton Land Trust, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy
- DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS SOLD or CONSERVATION EASEMENT (no public access)

See Table 9-1 for listing

Sources: RIGIS/RIDEM, TIVERTON LAND TRUST and TOWN OF TIVERTON as of 12/31/05. Tiverton Comprehensive Plan 1992, Figure 20.

DRAFT



The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN



## Figure 9-1 OPEN SPACE and RECREATION RESOURCES



*Weetamoo Woods was established in 1989 with a matching grant from the state of Rhode Island*

Narragansett Bay and its tributary bays including Mount Hope Bay and the Sakonnet River, provide expansive opportunities for recreational boating. The Tiverton Harbor and Coastal Waters Management Plan identifies a need for additional protected boat launch facilities. The Tiverton Harbor Commission has succeeded in the reconstruction of the public boat launch ramp at Fogland Beach, as well as the construction of the town boat landing and dinghy dock at the Stone Bridge abutment. New public waterfront facilities are part of the Villages on Mount Hope Bay development, and the Harbor Commission was a planning participant in that project. Planning for expanded public use of the Stone Bridge abutment area is also underway (see Land Use and Circulation Chapters), as well as developing more public waterfront facilities in north Tiverton.



*Many of Tiverton's recreational opportunities center on its waterfront*

## **9.2 Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Goal and Objectives**

### **Goal**

**Protect open space and coastal resources, and provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Tiverton.**

### **Objectives**

- Pursue open space acquisition within a comprehensive strategy that establishes criteria and priorities, accounts for the differing needs and opportunities of the various regions of the town, and coordinates the efforts of both public and private entities.
- Protect Tiverton's farmland as valuable open space, as part of the town's cultural heritage, and as an important economic activity.
- Improve the quality and delivery of recreational programs and facilities.
- Update the Tiverton Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plan along with a long-range capital program for its implementation.

## **9.3 Open Space, Coastal Resources and Recreation Policies**

### **Open Space**

The urgency to save quality open space has increased dramatically as the demand for new housing in Tiverton has increased. It is quite evident that Tiverton has been discovered as a desirable place to live, partly due to its accessibility to major job markets and good schools, but also because of the town's early successes in open space preservation and dedication to holding onto its rural character. However, while success in preserving open space makes the town more desirable as a place to live, it also increases the development pressure. All demographic trends point toward the critical need to preserve open space sooner, because there will be no "later." A fully built-out Tiverton is now in the foreseeable future, and each passing year increases the cost of saving open space.

While preserving open space can be costly, there may be no public expenditure that achieves more strategic goals of this plan. Consider the following:

#### Quality of Life

Preserving open space maintains the town's rural, maritime and scenic character by saving land, fields, trees and streams rather than permitting the town to develop into a continuum of subdivisions, stores, parking lots and malls.

### Tax Burden

In addition to preserving the town's unique pastoral setting, saving open space also helps control the town's population density, thereby holding down public expenditures for schools and services, and consequently lowering the public tax burden. According to extensive studies done by the American Farmland Trust, undeveloped land costs taxpayers less than one-third of what it takes to provide services for residential developments, as indicated below:

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Average Expenditures per \$1.00 Tax Revenue</u>
Commercial / Industrial	\$0.27
Farm / Forest	\$0.36
Residential	\$1.15

Source: *The Cost of Community Services: Making the Case for Conservation*  
American Farmland Trust, 2002

### Water Quality and Flood Control

Open space has direct benefits to the human population by protecting ground water recharge areas. This purifies the ground water and maintains sufficient levels to provide drinking water for approximately 40% of the town area and eliminating the need for additional publicly funded water systems. This process also reduces surface water runoff, which is very important for natural flood control.

### Environmental Protection

Preserving quality open space keeps a portion of the land in a natural condition, thereby preserving habitat for wildlife and promoting biodiversity.

The selection of land for open space is a function of its availability – as undeveloped land worthy of preservation with owners willing to sell the land or its development rights, or otherwise set it aside for permanent protection. In general, however, the criteria for selecting land areas to preserve in Tiverton are described as follows:

Priority is to be given to augmenting the existing major open space areas of the town, Weetamoo Woods and the Fort Barton Conservation Area, by acquiring adjacent properties, for the following reasons:

- Their central locations makes them generally accessible from all parts of town.
- The historic connections (Fort Barton to the American Revolution, Weetamoo Woods to Native American culture and the original town settlements along Eight Rod Way) are important identities associated with Tiverton's colonial and pre-colonial history and culture.

- The existing wetlands and exposed bedrock and ledge in those areas make them less appropriate for development, thereby more economical for acquisition.
- The natural plant communities in those areas (oak/holly forest, Atlantic white cedar swamp) are documented by plant ecologists as rare forest types, which is a persuasive criterion for many funding sources.
- The interest shown by The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island and the Tiverton Land Trust in assisting the town in funding additional open space in these specific areas.
- The natural habitat value of large, contiguous land areas is greater than an equal acreage of fragmented parcels.

Other general open space preservation priority criteria:

- The presence of rare plant/animal species or habitat.
- The presence of wetlands.
- Desirable scenic quality.
- Land that would be part of a regional greenway plan.
- The likelihood of development of a particular property that would significantly diminish the town's quality of life as defined in the Comprehensive Community Plan.
- Land that would create or enhance waterfront access or water views.
- Land that has high potential for passive recreation or educational value.

**Policy 1: Pursue the preservation of open space using selection criteria and priorities as defined above.**

There is a long-standing need for public open space in parts of town with high population density. Unfortunately, those very areas have little open space to acquire. Additionally, open space grants for such areas are rare because most of them are given by environmental organizations whose primary goal is the preservation of natural habitat. Nonetheless, a coordinated effort is needed between the Open Space Commission and the Recreation Commission to identify alternative sources of funding for acquiring land in high population areas that may be used for passive or active recreation.

**Policy 2: The Open Space Commission will work with community groups and the Recreation Commission to identify sources of funding for acquiring open space in the more urbanized areas of Tiverton.**

The establishment of the Tiverton Land Trust has greatly increased the potential for acquiring and protecting open space in the town. Private land trusts often have additional opportunities and greater flexibility in financing land protection as compared to public entities. The coordination of the efforts of the town – its officials and volunteer boards and commission, particularly the Open Space Commission – with those of the Tiverton Land Trust and other private land protection entities, will significantly enhance the preservation of open space in Tiverton.

**Policy 3: The town will coordinate closely with the Land Trust and other private organizations to ensure that both public and private monies are spent for the greatest benefit in preserving open space.**

Setting aside private open space is now provided for in the Rural Residential Development regulations of the zoning ordinance; such developments are required for proposed residential subdivisions within the Watershed Protection Overlay District. Management plans are also required for these open space areas. The open space that is set aside as part of a Rural Residential Development should be selected and managed in accordance with the open space protection criteria outlined in Policy 1, and in a manner that optimizes linkages with open space areas in abutting developments. To ensure this, the Planning Board (who approves all such subdivisions) shall coordinate its review of the development with the local commissions who have expertise in open space needs and environmental issues.

**Policy 4: The Planning Board will require input from the Open Space Commission and the Conservation Commission in their review of proposed open space areas of Rural Residential Developments.**

One unfortunate aspect of the conversion of land to housing is the loss of farmland, which affects the town's visual quality, culture and sense of place. The problem is complex, and many factors are outside the control of the town, such as the economic viability of small scale agriculture uses. However, there are existing state programs which give tax relief and offer development rights purchase to owners of agricultural land who agree to retain it for that use. Every effort should be made to promote these programs to local agricultural landowners.

**Policy 5: Protect farmland through active involvement in funding programs that preserve land for agricultural use.**

## Coastal Resources

The waterfront has always played an integral part in the life styles of Tiverton residents. As with any waterfront community, public access to the waterfront has become very limited due to development and to neglect of existing rights of way.

**Policy 6: The Tiverton Harbor and Coastal Waters Management Commission shall continue efforts to reclaim, maintain and acquire more rights of way to the waterfront, and to include the construction of a residential boat ramp and fishing pier.**

The Newport and Old Colony Railway right-of-way represents a potential resource, both due to its public ownership and its location along Tiverton's northwestern shoreline. As various future transportation options are considered for this property, opportunities for recreational uses such as a walking trail, bicycle path and waterfront access should be incorporated into any future plans.

**Policy 7: Preserve the public right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railway for future recreational use, including pedestrian and bicycle use and waterfront access.**



*The railroad right-of-way along the Sakonnet River should be utilized as a recreational as well as transportation resource.*

## Recreation Programs

*Note: Language and policies in this section are taken from the original plan*

Nature awareness builds an appreciation of community and the surrounding environment. Tiverton may be able to develop a nature center which tailors exhibits and programs to the local environment, and incorporates examples of the community's ecosystems. The nature center should be linked to the science curriculum of the town's schools.

**Policy 8: Consider development of a nature awareness program with a public education component that can be utilized as part of the school curriculum.**

School recreational facilities provide an important amenity to the community. Possibilities for expanding public utilization of these facilities should be investigated.

**Policy 9: Examine expanding the utilization of School Department recreational facilities for public use.**

A recreation and open space map available at the libraries and town hall would encourage use of the areas as well as build public support for open space and recreation programs.

**Policy 10: Publish a town-wide map showing recreational and open space resources, picnic areas, trails and waterfront rights-of-ways.**

Tiverton sports/activities programs are indicative of a common situation in American communities -- not having sufficient opportunity for teens. There are town programs tailored for the youth and early teens by private organizations such as Tiverton Youth Soccer, Schooner's Football, Little League and the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. There are also programs for adults and seniors. There are, however, very few for older teens. Though the School Department offers sports, and occasional gatherings for teens, there is a need for a teen center and activity coordinator to offer more programs for teens.

**Policy 11: Develop a long range plan to provide year round activities for older teens as part of a comprehensive recreation plan for all ages and population groups.**



*Tiverton needs more recreation programs for its teenagers*

## **10.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** *Note: This chapter is entirely rewritten*

Tiverton's challenge for the future lies in managing commercial and industrial economic development so that its tax base is strengthened and diversified, and jobs are provided for its residents, while its open spaces are protected and small town and rural character is maintained.

### **10.1 Economic Base**

Tiverton's economic base has historically been derived from its abundant natural resources. From its origins as a farming and fishing community, the town has seen growth in manufacturing, light industry and local commercial enterprises; numerous retail and service businesses are located along the major commercial corridors of Main and Stafford Roads in north Tiverton. The increased cost of municipal services, in part due to residential growth in town, is driving a need for additional economic growth to diversify the town's tax base. Future economic development that results in net tax revenue while not negatively impacting community character is the dominant sentiment expressed in public surveys and public workshops undertaken in recent years.

### **10.2 Agriculture, Fishing and Marine-Related Industries**

Agricultural activities are a special form of economic enterprise in Tiverton. According to the Rhode Island Division of Agriculture and Marketing, farming output in the town includes dairy, sheep, hogs, fruits and vegetables, eggs and poultry, and Christmas trees. According to information from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS), approximately 2,100 acres in the town are in active agricultural use, totaling about 11 percent of the land area of the town. Some residents are actively involved in agriculture of one form or another, and many operate roadside stands from which they sell produce.

Tiverton has been associated with the fishing industry throughout its history, due to its location along the eastern shores of the Sakonnet River and Mount Hope Bay. The local fleet of quahoggers, lobstermen and fishermen operate in Mount Hope Bay, the Sakonnet River and up to 100 miles off shore. Some of the enterprises are seasonal but many operate year round, selling their catch to various wholesale and retail merchants located along the waterfront. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Division of Fish and Wildlife has an ongoing shellfish spawning area immediately south of Grinnell's Beach, where approximately 385,000 pounds of quahogs have been transplanted. The viability of this fish and shellfish industry is dependent upon maintaining the water quality of the Sakonnet River and the streams which feed into it.

Narragansett Bay and its tributary bays including Mount Hope Bay and the Sakonnet River provide expansive opportunities for recreational boating, which is an integral part of both the state's image and economy. Tiverton has several marine related businesses -- boat sales and supplies -- and a number of boat yards and marinas along Riverside Drive and Main Road in the area known as the Tiverton Basin. The boat sales and services

include inboard and outboard motor boats, sailboats, and canoes and kayaks. Wind surfing has become a popular draw at Fogland Point, which has been identified as a preeminent area for the sport.



*Fishing is a traditional economic activity in Tiverton*

### 10.3 Jobs, Services and Industry

Although Tiverton provides over two thousand jobs, it is primarily a bedroom community and a net exporter of workers. The 2000 Census counted 7,809 town residents over the age of 16 as employed. Those who commute to work have a mean commute time of 28 minutes. The break-down by employment category is shown in Table 10-1.

**TABLE 10-1  
EMPLOYMENT BY CATEGORY, TIVERTON RESIDENTS**

<b><u>Employment Category</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Total</u></b>
Management and Professional	2,624	33.6%
Sales and Office Occupations	2,323	29.7%
Service Occupations	1,170	15.0%
Production, Transportation and Material Moving	826	10.6%
Construction, Extraction and Maintenance	818	10.5%
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	<u>48</u>	<u>0.6%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,809</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

## 10.4 Public Finance

In 2002, following the town-wide revaluation of property, the resultant burden shift in municipal taxes was an unsettling experience for some residents, particularly those on fixed incomes. The bulk of the town revenue comes from personal property taxes, particularly residential property, and there is a need for high quality economic development to offset this tax burden.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, the town had a total budget of \$30,102,067, with total revenues received of \$29,261,742 (actual expenditures were \$29,852,706). Of this amount, \$20,475,167, or 70% of the revenue, was generated from property taxes (including motor vehicle and business inventory taxes, which are being phased out by state law). State funding for education, reimbursement for the partial phase out of the motor vehicle tax and revenue sharing together provide approximately 22% of total annual revenue. The rest is generated by various fees, permits and licenses, and other assessments, including for example, payment in lieu of taxes by the Calpine Power Plant (\$680,351,000 for the 2004 FY). Tiverton property tax is levied at 100% of the assessed value, and in 2003, the town tax rate was \$14.05 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

Table 10-2 shows the break down of property tax revenue for the tax roll year 2004, which clearly shows that the great percentage of property taxes come from residential categories.

**TABLE 10-2**  
**PROPERTY TAX REVENUE, TAX ROLL YEAR 2004**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Residential	\$18,870,765	82.1%
Commercial	\$ 1,413,836	6.2%
Industrial	\$ 200,226	0.9%
Farm/Utility/Other	\$ 339,982	1.5%
Farm/Forest/Open Space*	\$ 771,557	3.3%
Motor Vehicle	\$ 1,110,250	4.8%
Business Inventory	<u>\$ 271,570</u>	<u>1.2%</u>
Total Property Tax	\$22,978,186	100 %

\* State designation

Expenditures for the 2003-2004 fiscal year are shown in Table 10-3. Financing the public school system accounts for the bulk of the town expenses, close to two-thirds of annual expenditures. This is followed by expenses for public safety (police and fire) which generally approaches 13% of the budget, and financial administration (assessor, treasurer, tax collector, insurance, pensions, social security) which is approximately 9%. General government (debt service, legal services, courts and town government including administration, clerk, council, planning and zoning) and public works (road and building maintenance, landfill operations) together make up approximately another 9%.

**TABLE 10-3**  
**APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES, FY 2003-04**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Appropriated</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Education	\$19,198,897	63.8%
Schools, Capital Expenditures	\$ 289,500	0.9%
<b>School Department, Total</b>	<b>\$19,488,397</b>	<b>64.7%</b>
General Government	\$ 1,253,593	4.2%
Financial Administration	\$ 2,753,577	9.2%
Public Safety	\$ 3,866,439	12.8%
Public Works	\$ 1,352,347	4.5%
Grants, Health and Sanitation*	\$ 812,982	2.7%
Parks and Recreation	\$ 98,810	0.3%
Associated Activities**	\$ 101,146	0.3%
Municipal, Capital Expenditures	\$ 374,776	1.3%
<b>Municipal Government, Total</b>	<b>\$10,613,670</b>	<b>35.3%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,102,067</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Includes library services, payments to social service organizations, and rubbish and recycling collections

\*\* Includes senior services and payments to various (non-regulatory) commissions

Town expenditures in the two general categories, municipal and education, shown in Table 10-4 for five recent fiscal years show a steady and significant increase in expenditures.

**TABLE 10-4**  
**BUDGET EXPENDITURES, FY 2001 – FY 2005**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Municipal</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Total</u>
2000-2001	\$8,813,793	\$16,504,785	\$25,318,578
2001-2002	\$9,571,077	\$17,690,808	\$27,261,885
2002-2003	\$9,960,997	\$18,507,812	\$28,468,809
2003-2004	\$10,613,670	\$19,488,397	\$30,102,067
2004-2005	\$11,841,158	\$20,908,730	\$32,749,888
% Increase	34.3%	26.7%	29.4%

At the time of the original printing of the Comprehensive Community Plan (1992), budget data from the FY ending in June 1990 was provided; for this fiscal year the total budget was \$16,664,000 (rounded up to the nearest thousand) with 4,676,000 (or 28%) appropriated to municipal expenses and 11,968,000 (or 72%) appropriated to education.

Over the fifteen year period (1990-2005), the town's budget has nearly doubled with the municipal expenses growing at a faster rate than the education expenses: 153% and 75% increase, respectively.

### **10.5 Economic Growth Opportunities**

Approximately 2,000 acres of Tiverton are zoned for commercial and industrial use, and much of it remains available for development or redevelopment. To ensure that new development is consistent with the town's desire to protect its character and quality of life, Tiverton must address such growth related issues as public water and sewer availability, traffic and parking, commercial design standards, and impact on schools, public safety and surrounding neighborhoods.

Since the Comprehensive Community Plan was originally written, Tiverton has worked to identify suitable economic development opportunities. Two separate planning studies were undertaken. An economic development study completed in late 2003 by the firm Edwards and Kelcey was followed by a town center planning study undertaken by The Cecil Group in 2004. Both of these projects provided opportunities for community input. Although neither study has been formally accepted by the town, both contain development strategies that could be incorporated into future policy.

The economic development study recognized that the town's strong quality of life is rooted in its agriculture and marine traditions, and that the comprehensive plan emphasizes the community's goal of maintaining and protecting its historic and rural character. Recommendations focused on protecting and promoting agriculture and maritime industries, fully utilizing the town's Enterprise Zone designation, developing town-wide design review standards, strengthening the various commercial areas in town through physical enhancements and zoning modifications, developing a small business assistance program, and exploring tourism potential. The development of the town industrial/technology park and a potential town center were identified as specific projects to be promoted.

The town center study was done during a development moratorium adopted by the Town Council in order to properly plan for the future of several hundred acres of undeveloped land around Route 24 between Main Road and Fish Road. The plan recommends that the significant growth potential of this area be directed, in part, to a mixed use village center. This type of development would achieve many things -- increase the commercial tax base, provide additional retail services to town residents, increase affordable housing options, provide a location for municipal buildings, and add public green space to north Tiverton -- while keeping with the scale, character and image of Tiverton.

The economic development study included questionnaires and public meetings for both businesses and residents, and the town center study included a community wide public charrette (interactive workshop) and contact with impacted business and property owners. Results show that Tiverton is open to creative and well-designed non-regional, commercial development that diversifies the tax base, but is at a scale that does not

adversely impact its unique small town character, does not burden its roadways and does not contribute to sprawl.

### **Industrial/Technology Park**

Tiverton has actively worked to develop its industrial park, located to the east of Route 24 near the Fish Road exit. In 2000, the town amended the zoning ordinance to allow for its development as a large scale office park, and a site plan containing sixteen pods on 126 buildable acres was prepared, and water and sewer lines were extended to serve the potential development. The marketing of the industrial park as a high quality office and technology park in the early 2000's was not successful. However, because of its access to public water and sewer, as well as the co-location of a natural gas powered electrical generating plant, the industrial park remains a desirable site for the location of high tech industries, office, research and development and light manufacturing uses.

### **Traditional Economic Activities**

Agriculture is one of the economic activities in Tiverton which is most reflective of the town's rural and historic character. Its family farms contribute to the unique visual quality of the town, and preserve open space and natural resources while providing economic and quality of life benefits. Another example, the Pardon Gray Preserve, land acquired in 2000 by the Tiverton Land Trust, is being used by a local farmer as part of its management plan. This serves to maintain its economic and scenic contribution to the community. Supporting agriculture by protecting existing farmland and engaging in creative partnerships is a critical component of Tiverton's future.

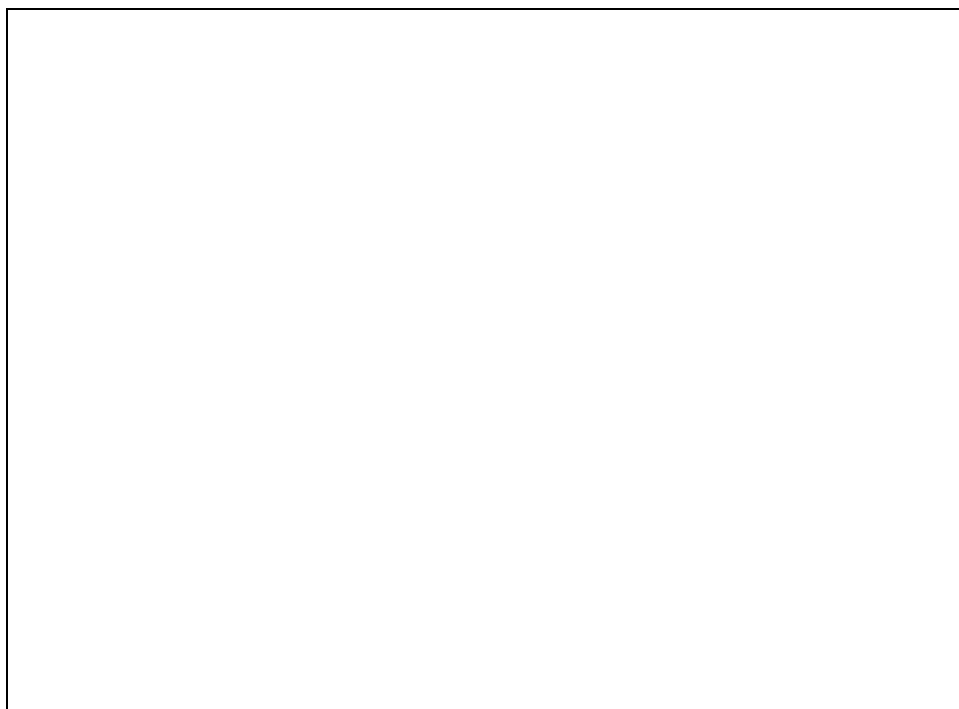


*Farming: An economic activity that is a way of life in Tiverton*

The establishment of a Waterfront District in 2001 as part of comprehensive amendments to the zoning ordinance and map, and its application to various waterfront land from Nannaquacket Bridge north to the border with Fall River, provides a regulatory means to encourage and consolidate marine related uses. The opportunity exists to provide additional such uses and appropriately scaled development along Tiverton's waterfront that would enhance both the local economy and the town's maritime character.

The Main Road commercial area from Souza Road north to Fall River is the closest thing to a "main street" in Tiverton. The storefronts which line Main Road, particularly along the northerly end near Fall River, are a great resource for the establishment of small businesses which require low overhead and active street life. At the southerly end of this commercially zoned section of Tiverton's major commercial corridor, particularly in the areas close to the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, opportunities exist for the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels into new commercial retail and service development.

Lastly, over the years Tiverton has developed a reputation for the arts, much of it focused on the Four Corners area where crafts, performing arts and nationally know art galleries combine with unique retail to provide successful economic center that enhances the character of the town. The development of the arts, as a component of tourism, can be another opportunity for economic growth that compliments the town's character.



*Main Road is Tiverton's major commercial corridor*

## **10.6 Economic Development Goal and Objectives**

### **Goal**

**Expand economic opportunities in Tiverton, and pursue and support forms of development that will maximize economic benefit while preserving and enhancing the environment and character of the town.**

## **Objectives**

- Ensure that the local zoning regulations accurately reflect the goals and desires as stated in the Comprehensive Community Plan for future commercial and industrial development, particularly in terms of location and categories and intensities of uses.
- Plan for and support only commercial and industrial development that provides net tax benefits and is at a scale and design that is consistent with the character of the town.
- Ensure that all new commercial and industrial development is well designed, aesthetically pleasing, compliments the character of the town and does not result in site and traffic impacts that adversely affect the character and quality of life of the town.
- Maximize the economic opportunities of the town industrial/technology park.
- Encourage small business development and revitalization.
- Preserve and promote agricultural activities that maintain the rural character of Tiverton.
- Promote the utilization of Tiverton's waterfront for marine-related uses that would enhance the local economy and the town's maritime character.
- Promote and support the arts as an economic activity that enhances the quality of life in Tiverton.

## **10.7 Economic Development Policies**

### **Commercial and Industrial Zoning**

Commercial land uses in Tiverton are primarily located in north Tiverton. Although most of the commercially used areas were developed before the town was zoned, these areas generally correspond to the General Commercial, Highway Commercial or Waterfront Districts. Main Road, for a short section in the Stone Bridge area, and along its entire length north of Souza Road, and Stafford Road north of its intersection with Bulgammarsh Road, together form the main commercial corridors in town and are zoned for General Commercial. The Highway Commercial District is in place along Souza Road and the Route 24 - Fish Road interchange, and at the north end of Stafford Road near the boundary with Fall River. The Waterfront District is in place along the shoreline of the Tiverton Basin, the site of the Villages at Mount Hope Bay, and at the very northwest corner of town along Mount Hope Bay (see Figure 5-2).

The planning studies and development proposals that have occurred since the 2001 comprehensive zoning ordinance and map changes have led to further consideration of the town's commercial zoning. In particular, two issues have arisen. One is the continuous commercial zoning along Main Road north of Souza Road. The commercial land uses along this corridor are separated in certain areas by residential land uses which have maintained their integrity despite being part of a "strip" commercial district, and actually serve to break the strip into distinct nodes. Both land uses may be better served by changing the residential areas along Main Road into residential zoning districts. The other issue is whether or not it is desirable to have a commercial district that promotes highway dependent and regional commercial uses. The town may be better served by modifying the Highway Commercial District so that it more accurately reflects the goal of the comprehensive plan, particularly this Economic Development Chapter, in terms of the preferred type and scale of new commercial development.

In addition, Tiverton currently has one Industrial District totaling about 1,400 acres, located along both sides of Route 24 generally from the Route 24 - Fish Road interchange north to the Massachusetts border. Much of this land remains vacant.

**Policy 1: Evaluate the existing and potential uses of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses, and consider options for adjusting the land areas and intensity of uses so that future commercial and industrial development is compatible with the scale and character of the town.**

### **New Commercial and Mixed Use Development**

It is the stated goal of this chapter to provide for economic development in Tiverton which provides a benefit in terms of net tax revenue and jobs while not negatively impacting the town's cherished small town character, burdening its road system and contributing to sprawl. The town's geographic location and highway access make it very attractive to development, including retail development of a regional nature. The town must balance the rights of property owners to develop with the desire of the community at large to manage such development so that it enhances the town's character, not takes away from it.

The planning studies undertaken on behalf of the town in recent years emphasize high end and niche retail, waterfront related retail, and retail that responds to local needs such as a grocery store. Also recommended is residential-commercial mixed use including housing over stores. Most desirable would be a town center development that includes public and municipal facilities and affordable housing as part of a village style development. . A retail center could be developed as a mixture of store types and sizes arranged in a traditional main street pattern, with two story buildings that include residences and offices over retail. Providing for such a relatively dense mixed use development in Tiverton will require amendments to the zoning ordinance to specify the mix of allowable uses as well as site and design standards.

**Policy 2a: Support and promote only new commercial developments which primarily serve local needs.**

**Policy 2b: Consider the development of a “Tiverton Town Center” that consists of a comprehensive mixed use development.**

### **Commercial Design Guidelines**

The Tiverton Zoning Ordinance requires design and site plan review for new industrial and commercial development that meet a certain threshold requirement. Concern with guiding the aesthetics of new development, particularly commercial development along Tiverton’s main business corridors, Main Road and Stafford Road, led to the establishment and funding of a Design Standards Project initiated in late 2004 by Dodson Associates of Massachusetts. The project evaluated the development potential of certain sections of Main Road and will result in the creation of a design guidelines booklet to direct property owners and developers in their plans for new development in the commercial districts. The guidelines will address such issues as building design and placement, parking, buffers and landscaping.

**Policy 3: Adopt and apply building and site design standards for new commercial development and redevelopment in Tiverton.**

### **Fiscal Impact**

Well designed commercial development at an appropriate scale benefits the citizens of Tiverton by providing employment opportunities and expanding the tax base. In general, commercial entities require fewer town services, and the costs of these services can be offset by user fees.

While integration of development design standards in the zoning code will assure quality development, resulting in higher quality employment opportunities and increased project value, it would also be in the town’s best interest to have an independent evaluation of the annual tax revenue generated by a development as compared to the expected cost of services. Such a fiscal impact analysis should be done for any commercial, industrial or mixed use development done as part of a comprehensive land development project.

**Policy 4: Require fiscal impact analysis of commercial and mixed use developments to determine the impact on the town’s tax revenue versus cost of services.**

### **Industrial/Technology Park**

The industrial/technology park, serviced by water and sewer and with potential energy provided by the gas fired power plant, remains available for development. This land could be used for a range of nonresidential uses, including light manufacturing and clean

technology, office and associated uses, with the proper densities, design controls and mixture of uses.

**Policy 5: Promote the development of the industrial park for suitable light manufacturing, technology, office and associated uses.**

### **Small Business Development**

An active program to improve the image and functioning of the Main Road commercial area from Souza Road north to Fall River would support existing businesses and encourage new ones. In addition to reconsideration of the commercial zoning along the entire length of Main Road, and the development of design standards for new development and redevelopment, a revitalization study for this area could identify the types of improvements needed. Such improvements could include streetscape enhancements, shared parking and cohesive signage. Other areas of town, such as Bliss Four Corners, Stafford Road and Stone Bridge could benefit from a concentrated program of business improvement and development. An office of economic development or a full time town planner could assist in this goal.

A proposal to create a Tiverton Small Business Association was awarded grant money from the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation to assist the business owners locate and obtain financial, educational and consultative resources to help their businesses survive and thrive. In 2004, the Tiverton Economic Development Commission began the organizational activities of such a group.

**Policy 6: Support the Small Business Association in assisting in the revitalization of businesses along Main Road in north Tiverton, and in other areas.**



*Tiverton's small businesses are very important to the town*

The entire community of Tiverton is within the Tiverton/Portsmouth Enterprise Zone. This designation provides for town and state tax benefits to commercial enterprises which expand, relocate or locate in the town. The impact of these benefits must be recognized when studying new development. It is apparent from business surveys conducted that many Tiverton business owners are not aware of the enterprise zone or do not find it beneficial. The town should schedule workshops to educate the business owners and provide a conduit for requests for assistance.

**Policy 7: Encourage businesses to benefit from the enterprise zone designation.**

Amendments to the Tiverton Zoning Ordinance in 2001 addressed restrictions impacting small and home based businesses. One amendment dealt with “mixed use residential”, a residential use and a commercial use in the same structure, totally separated; this use is now allowed by right in the General Commercial District and by special use permit in the Village Commercial and Waterfront Districts. This would typically consist of a residence above a first floor business, and is seen as a way to make commercial areas more vibrant and interesting and to make businesses more viable by adding another source of income (as well as providing housing). It could also include multiple residences over larger retail areas or businesses, although this is not specifically addressed in the zoning.

**Policy 8: Evaluate zoning ordinance regulations addressing mixed uses and modify where needed to allow for the diversification and strengthening of the commercial areas in Tiverton.**

**Agriculture**

To support family farming, farmers will be targeted as prospective members of the proposed Small Business Association, and as such will be eligible for the grants, low interest loans, educational assistance and consultative services that will be made available by the association. The Economic Development Commission has also liaised with the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District office to provide education and resources for Tiverton farmers, particularly those with smaller acreage to provide education and resources to maximize revenues.

It also might be advantageous for the association or a consortium of farmers to investigate the possibility of creating a centrally located farmer's market at which citizens could purchase seasonal produce, baked goods, cut flowers, etc. Currently, the closest such markets are in Fall River, Bristol and Portsmouth.

**Policy 9: Promote expansion of agricultural activities in the town through the efforts of the Small Business Association and the Eastern RI Conservation District.**

Existing farms in areas zoned for residential use are liable to be pushed out when development pressures rise, thereby destroying the rural quality of Tiverton. A tax assessment system which allows farmers to be taxed at a rate appropriate to the current agricultural use of the land can help ensure that Tiverton's farms remain, and the town's visual character is maintained. Rhode Island has a long-standing law allowing for lower taxation of agricultural and open space land; information about this Farm, Forest and Open Space Program should be disseminated throughout the farming community.

**Policy 10: Continue the use of tax alternatives/incentives that encourage preservation of agricultural land for farming use.**

The importance of regional agricultural planning for the preservation of farms is recognized and encouraged at the state level. Regional cooperation ensures that the implications and decisions about issues impacting on agricultural activity in the region are fully understood. It would seem only natural to avail the town of the expertise of the highly successful Southeast Massachusetts Coastal Agricultural Cooperative by facilitation of membership of town farmers, fishermen and merchants of town grown consumables.

**Policy 11: Partake in regional planning for agricultural activity and support together with East Bay townships, southeast Massachusetts towns and state agencies.**

**Waterfront Opportunities**

Tiverton's active long-running fishing industry has been somewhat constrained by the lack of modern facilities. A new public boat launch would enable local fishermen to launch their boats more quickly and efficiently, allowing business expansion and increased employment opportunities.

In addition, while boat sales and services are in place along the waterfront, recreational fishing and boating could also be encouraged and expanded through the development of more slips and/or an establishment with docking facilities, as well as with development of the boat launch and facilities for kayak and canoe deployment.

Supporting these maritime uses and protecting an important part of Tiverton's economy requires maintaining the old Stone Bridge abutment which provides a harbor for the fishing fleet and recreational boats. The town dock at Stone Bridge, currently used by commercial shellfishermen, is also important for access to the Tiverton Basin; a condition of state funding of improvements to the abutment is use of the dock by commercial fishermen.

**Policy 12 Promote local fishing and marine related businesses by developing and rehabilitating appropriate support facilities.**

Several parcels of land along Tiverton's waterfront, particularly north of the Sakonnet River Bridge, are vacant or underdeveloped. In addition, several acres of land will become available with the relocation of the bridge (See Circulation Chapter 8). The town should work in conjunction with the R.I. Department of Transportation to ensure the relocation of water dependent businesses that are displaced as a result of the bridge realignment, as well as on plans for the redevelopment of the available parcels. This work could be done as part of a larger study of Tiverton's waterfront which includes a review of current land use, regulations and controls to guide future development in a manner that promotes water dependent uses while maintaining public access to the waterfront.

**Policy 13: Adopt a long term waterfront plan incorporating marine-related uses, particularly focusing on the area north of the Sakonnet River Bridge.**

### **Arts and Culture**

In addition to the arts activities on-going in Tiverton Four Corners, a proposed arts colony off Crandall Road south of Bulgarmarsh Road under planning stages in 2005 would provide affordable housing for 50 artists, along with an art gallery and restaurant. The colony would function as a cooperative, allowing artists to buy or rent one of the units, provided they meet the income guidelines, and share in the community gallery space. This is one means of promoting Tiverton as a community for artists and the arts.

**Policy 14: Support the artist colony and promote the development of the arts as another form of economic activity.**



*Tiverton Four Corners is a unique and attractive village shopping area focusing on the arts*

## **11.0 TIVERTON TOMORROW** (*italics represent changes to current plan*)

This *final chapter of the Tiverton Comprehensive Community Plan* assigns responsibility for attainment of the goals, objectives and policies contained in the preceding chapters. Additionally, it establishes a time frame for their accomplishment and assigns responsibility for keeping each element of the Comprehensive *Community Plan* current.

### **11.1 Continuous Planning**

The adoption of a Comprehensive *Community Plan* should be part of a continuous planning process for Tiverton. The Town Council, Planning Board, *all other boards and commissions*, and all town agencies *and departments* should use this document for guidance in *decision making*, regulatory actions and allocation of public funds. Town *departments* should also actively contribute to the required five-year updates of the plan to ensure it reflects the needs and desires of the community.

A fundamental purpose of this plan is to formulate guidance for land use decisions. State law requires that the town zoning ordinance be reviewed and changed as necessary to conform to the Comprehensive *Community Plan*. This review of Tiverton's zoning ordinance by the Planning Board will be the first and more fundamental implementation action following adoption of the plan. The Planning Board, as the custodian of the Comprehensive *Community Plan*, also has the responsibility to update the plan every five years.

### **11.2 Plan Implementation**

Each of the plan elements in Chapters 4 through 10 contain numerous "policies" to accomplish the overall goal and the objectives of the respective plan element. In *Figure 11-1* that follows, those policies are tabulated with the town *body* that will implement them *identified*. The table also indicates the *general* time frame for implementation.

An annual review of the implementation progress will be made by the Planning Board, and a report made to the Town Council. This report could be timed to fit into the annual budget process.

By linking the annual budget process to a review of the Comprehensive *Community Plan*, elements requiring capital or operating budget allocations can be reprioritized annually based on changing conditions and needs. The annual budget proposal will thus be linked to the long-range plan and vision of the town, and will include input from the Planning Board.